



**BACK TO ENGLAND**

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Verse  
*Songs of the South*  
*The Hidden Land*  
*Pedlar's Pieces*  
*Road Rhymes*  
*A Shuiler Sings*

# BACK TO ENGLAND

*By*  
MAIRIN MITCHELL

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*TO*  
*EILEEN*

To *The Irish Press* and to *Ireland To-Day* the author's  
thanks are due for permission to reprint portions of  
certain of her articles.

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Now no way can I stay :  
Save back to England, all the world's my way.

*King Richard the Second, 1, iii, 206-207*

## CHAPTER I

### THIS ENGLAND

THE war of the German Nazis for world domination has added another chapter to the story of the dispersion of peoples. The historical process of Germanic expansion has been quickened in the present century by an increased aggression urged among the German people, many of whom, when acting collectively, form a predatory social type. The breaking of boundaries, the uprooting of populations, involves as any dynamic period does, limitless human misery; the tempo of adaptation of peoples to new environment will be noted by the sociologists. This is an age of violent transition, and a long time will pass before the world has a different set of values, before art has a higher place than armaments. But we on this war-stormed island fight for that day when the same sweet things of life can be enjoyed once more, when we can watch for a star-shower in a radiant summer night-sky, and not a flash from a bomb-rack in the skies. The blessings of all men on that day when they can look out with untroubled eyes over blue tides and shining rivers; when their hearts can be lifted by the song of a thrush in a hedge starry with blossom, when the blood will quicken to the sound of a fiddle from some fire-lit tavern and men and women will leap to life. It is of these things, not of wars or famines mocking our age of technocracy that most of us want to read. So, while noting events connected

with the war situation, I have also set down my impressions of a continent in some parts of which, between 1937 and 1939, it was still possible at times to forget the gathering war clouds and to wander freely.

Apart from economic and military motives, the will to wander is one of the most constant factors of human existence, the questing spirit a law of life. The world would be a poorer place without those folks like my sailor uncle who could tell stories about most parts of the world, roar sea shanties, and play rollicking airs. Small wonder if a child's mind was set early on the far places brought home by a rover, so that when I grew up I decided to be a writer, in the hope of seeing something of the world. And a share of the world I have seen, both in the days when a knapsack and in the days when a gas-mask, hung from one's shoulders as traveller's luggage. Starting out from the brown bogs, the shining rivers, the brooding hills of Ireland, I have journeyed over a wide space of the world, and then back to England, green and pleasant till battle-armed behind her bastion cliffs of Dover. I have known intimately the little lanes of Kent, the wide marshlands with lovely names like Appledore and Rolvenden, and the villas no longer seen as bungaloid blots on the Weald, but as the hero homes of England when sacrificed in the front line of Britain's battlefield. I have slept in and out of inns in remote villages in Oxfordshire, and idled by the tangled hedges of wild roses, the rambling streams, the red-brown and blue-roan cattle grazing in the lush fields. And have always come back to Oxford to look at the poplars which make Magdalen Bridge for ever beautiful. Oxford a city of speed by 1941, where learning and leisure lay as forgotten backwaters off the main stream of life.

But there was still in the Penn country that sweet and gracious place called Jordans where pigeons fluttered round the Mayflower Barn, and an old English garden where blue delphiniums and long lanterns of laburnams gave colour to the Quaker quiet, and hearing a bird symphony I have thought what a songful place England must have been in the far times when her land was forest. I have watched the Friends go into the Meeting House at the wooded entrance to Old Jordans, to share with one another that inner light, to speak out of the silence the message of spirit. But their hall at Friends' House, Euston Road, had been heated with many an incendiary speech, for Quaker tolerance had opened its wide doors to speakers scorching with the rebel flame. It was odd to see in the heart of pacifism a red streamer, "Smash British Imperialism", across the hall, when Peadar O'Donnell, champion of the victimised, came over to talk of a big Belfast strike.

Wherever on earth I am, I shall always want to see the London parks in springtime, to hear the Lancashire accents of the Euston porters, to look on that wide sweep of the Thames from Westminster Bridge as I saw it on a night in the early spring of 1940, when long pale streamers of moonlight like Japanese lanterns rippled down its dark surface; a night when London was waiting, watchful for the things that later turned that peaceful scene into an inferno, and London became a city of heroes. And in another corner of the earth I would miss that view through the old archway at the bottom of Essex Street where, through a fairy fretwork of trees, bright signs once shone above the river. I should want to hear again the cracked bell of St. Pancras Church I first heard in a rat-hole off the Euston Road, when the bed-covering



was so scanty that you had to put the thankfully heavy hearthrug on the bed. Those were draughty days. There will always be memories of the London of 1941, London bombed and battling; tired and sad, but enduring and proud through her fiercest ordeal. Memories of Great Russell Street, its plane trees making that quarter like a Parisian boulevard, swarming with refugees, one of the most cosmopolitan streets in Europe. I see it on a May morning in 1940. Anti-aircraft guns break on the sweetness of the spring morning, a day when daffodils spill sunshine from a flower stall in a dark alley off Red Lion Square. Along Great Russell Street the lunch-hour editions of the news placards tell us that the firing is up the Thames Estuary. At the gate of the British Museum the paper man sells the story, the story of a world in flux, of dynamic changes, of reeling shocks to old orders, of the challenge to all that is static in men's minds. And there stands the British Museum, which matured to its venerable dignity and rose to be wisdom's sanctuary, out of the benevolent book-loving mind of the Irishman, Hans Sloane. Through the spacious iron gates, up the vast fore-court, one is brought face to face with a world of turbulent change, for the voices round one are mainly those of foreign refugees, exiled scholars who find their way to the world's greatest treasury of learning. The wide shallow stair that leads to those gracious Ionic columns, it is the way of the Muses. How many of the world's greatest scholars have been led to this, the very Fount of Learning? A classic sage within the Reading-Room once told me, as he took me through a tricky piece of Latin, that two notable writers had not made use of the Museum's immense library. He may have

been wrong, and I give their names without prejudice. They are, Mr. H. G. Wells, and Mr. George Bernard Shaw. "Ah well," I said to the Athenian-minded man, "what use would these million books be to them anyhow? Don't they know everything in the universe to start with?" And Ancient Athens chuckled.

Thackeray in the *Roundabout Papers*, under the title of "Nil Nisi Bonum" has written with feeling of the British Museum: "I have seen all sorts of domes, Peter's and Paul's, Sophia, Pantheon—what not?—and have been struck by none of them so much as by that catholic dome in Bloomsbury, under which one million volumes are housed. What peace, what love, what truth, what beauty, what happiness for all, what generous kindness for you and me are here spread out! It seems to me one cannot sit down in that place without a heart full of grateful reverence. I own to have said my grace at the table, and to have thanked Heaven for this my English birthright, freely to partake of these beautiful books, and speak truth as I find it there." And Thackeray has said that for many of us. For here the minds of the ages are open to the humblest reader, here serene wisdom, sweet philosophy, lofty sciences, reveal themselves, yes, to you and me, Dear Reader. Look around and see the workers at their desks, each one adding something to the world's store of knowledge. For some it is the unearthing of buried riches, bright jewels which will delight the eyes of others as well as the discoverer's. For others it is hearts-ease, a blessed and healing peace, the anæsthesia of Book Burial.

And later, when the closing-bell rings sharply, the readers hurry out, past the Easter Island god, Hoa-Haka-Nana-Ia, now surrounded with scaffolding. They are taking him to "a place of safety". So the

gods are going too. I look at the Memorial to the members of the Museum Staff who gave their lives in the War that Was to End War, 1914-1918, and beside the laurel chaplet stands a young reader in khaki, his gas-mask over his shoulder. I catch sight of a thoughtful elderly man in dark-blue and gold-braid uniform, a naval reservist who has slipped in to the desk at which he once worked as a civilian. At the main entrance stands a member of the Decontamination Squad in full equipment, and with his gas-mask on he looks like the Man from Mars. Ah, if the bombs should ever fall through that dome. . . .

In Bloomsbury you could never forget that the international war was but one side of the struggle; that the class war was to come. Here were veteran socialist fighters, people who struggled for the emancipation of the workers. But here too were many Park pundits, sham socialists, introverted intellectuals, professional atheists who would peddle the Pope if it paid, all the Pink People who met in the café up the street for breakfast at midday, because they worked so hard reading what the Supreme Pontiff of the Pink People said they might read, and piously avoiding everything on his Expurgatorium Index. Nowhere perhaps was the old puritan spirit of England more manifest than in members of the most advanced political section, just as in Ireland the Jansenist outlook was most marked in many of the ultra-Republicans. It was after listening to the jackeens of Bloomsbury that I decided the only revolution I could ever join would be one which gave to women the control of world affairs too long messed up by men. Because this would be the only revolution which would ever put an end to wars.

World war had begun in 1916 when Spain erupted.

I had been in Spain that year, and it did not require any faculty of a prophet to see that the Spanish struggle meant the beginning of a world conflict. So for the next three years I saw all that I could of Europe; so soon to be a continent in cataclysm. The more often you go abroad and return to England, that most perplexing of all countries, the more convinced do you become that "there'll always be an England". This island whose shores have swarmed with all the races that have gone to make the British people so complex, yet remains for ever that indefinable thing called English. In this book some "cranks" have deliberately been included to show that this small island is so liberal in its species as to include extremes of type. These people whose life-pattern does not conform to that of the majority, are deviations from the normal, definitely atypical, and will not be mistaken for anything else.

The plain people of England have always held liberty as their most cherished principle. In the past they have not always been very quick to see injustices on their own doorstep, but by 1941 they had so advanced that they had an acute political and social conscience. The plain people of England who reacted so fiercely against Hitler's invasion of Czecho-Slovakia in March 1939 were the same people who made an outcry against the indiscriminate internment of enemy aliens in 1940. They, whose ancestors had risen against a Star Chamber, were the people who forced their Government in July 1940 to concede that sentences of death imposed by Special Courts in war zones should be reviewed by a tribunal. These were the citizens of England who, once their sense of justice was roused, called out in protest, and meant what they said. They were the

ordinary, average, men and women of Britain, who, when told to "go to it" did so, and gave bravely their best, making the fight "a war of the unknown warriors". They were the heroes who proved they would rather "die on their feet than live on their knees". They were not the handful of people who talked you tired about democracy but tried to get out of fighting for it when the time came, the over-tone intellectuals, endlessly arguing, the dialectical nuisances between whom and the honest pacifist there is the world of difference.

The day that the English people lost for the time their Magna Carta, I listened to some planes sawing their way through the sky. "There goes the death-rattle of democracy" I said. To defend itself, democracy had to sound its own death-knell for a time, Britain to become a Police State. But the English would surrender nearly every liberty in order to defend Liberty. They, the plain people, knew that their England of the future was something altogether unpredictable. They were fighting to overthrow Nazism, but not to maintain the existing economic and social framework at home. Had any foreigner asked in 1940 what is the voice of England, the average man or woman would probably have referred him to the Eborian voice of J. B. Priestley on the air. But the things that J. B. Priestley said were not the things that the English ruling classes said. The aim of the latter was to prop up, to patch up, that tottering, top-heavy structure of society which could no more survive the coming storm than an umbrella could withstand a cyclone. Social changes were already hastened by urban evacuation; the difference between town and country people had been more profound than any class distinction. The English are truly

a complex people, and of all things most puzzling about them to a foreigner was their snobbery. The most pronounced snobs were to be found among the proletariat; but the snobbery here had a monetary rather than a class basis, the wage-scale often determining the social standing of workers living in the same row of houses. The snobbery of slums and suburbs was a rooted feature of English life in peace time. England's near-Revolution of 1926 was broken by snobbery, the Old School Tie running London's transport system. But the strangest thing about that strike was when the Labour leaders sought Counsel's opinion as to whether the strike was legal or not. Yet, though we might jest over this last proceeding, it had its roots in an ancient virtue. André Maurois, writing of English tradition says: "The habit of disciplined assent to the decisions of a majority is as old as the juries of the Norman kings, and also beneath surface conflicts of opinion, the deeper unity of the nation appears to be indestructible." The time was not yet; the final stage of the English revolution was to come. And when it did, it would be based on that underlying unity which is a broader thing than the system that survived the crisis of 1926.

This England, who shall define it? It is compounded of the elements that have blown across two oceans, and of land features which give it a greater variety of scenery for its size than any other country in the world. So varied that many of the county boundaries divide one type of scenery from another. This England of Iberians, Celts, Romans, Saxons, Danes, Normans, and all the peoples who have sought the shelter of her shores, a land of so many different race-streams, yet of one people when the last fortress of freedom was to be stormed.

*There is not anything more wonderful  
 Than a great people moving towards the deep  
 Of an unguessed and unfear'd future, nor  
 Is aught so dear of all held dear before  
 As the new passion stirring in their veins  
 When the destroying Dragon wakes from sleep.<sup>1</sup>*

But perhaps for the Dragon we should substitute some Leviathan of the Deep. It is the sea above all that has moulded the English character. If there is one thing for which the ordinary Englishman has a greater passion than the country, it is the water. No matter what the weather, he must take his one holiday by the sea. You must have noticed when travelling abroad, the scarcely suppressed delight of English people when a lake suddenly flashes past their window. "Look!" Better still when a shining streak of blue tells them "there's the sea!" The Frenchman will barely turn his head, but this English habit gives him some amusement, and he could tell you with Gallic malice this tale against the Englishman who once when dining in Paris, in a moment of abstraction poured himself out a glass of water instead of wine, and tasting the water said with infinite relish, "Ah, that's me!"

The history of the British Empire is explained by geography. The empire-builders of Britain were men whose eyes were on the oceans rather than the land. "Since the day when the destruction of the Armada laid the foundation of her command of the sea, the maintenance of that command, on which the existence of her Empire depends, has been at the bottom of every one of her political moves: everything else is secondary and derivative from that object,

<sup>1</sup> John Freeman.

which alone determines her attitude to other Powers. Anyone who threatens England's command of the sea, and therefore any great European Power which could possibly set on foot a coalition against her, any independent Power holding the Flanders coast, is her enemy". This passage taken from Paul Cohen-Portheim's book, *England, the Unknown Isle*, explains precisely, British foreign policy for the last three and a half centuries. It is the Realpolitik of Great Britain.

To find the heart of England, one must never make the mistake of thinking of her as a country primarily industrial. Before everything else she remains a maritime Power, and though her civilisation is superficially urban, the English have still fundamentally the character of a sea-faring people. This fact is not so obvious as the Englishman's love of his countryside, because the latter is usually more easily accessible to him than the sea, and his passion for gardening more easily satisfied than his deeper-lying desire for sailing. The product of an urban society, the average Englishman seeks his escape in the peace of his countryside, while his unfulfilled desire stretches out to the sea. His country remains for him, as it was for Shakespeare, "this fortress built by Nature for herself, against infection and the hand of war." City, land, and sea, in addition to mixed ancestry and island-geography have given to the English people that genius for compromise which has been the bewilderment, infuriation, or admiration of other peoples.

This England, who shall define it? André Maurois, Gerhardt, a score of other eminent writers have interpreted it from divers angles; English men and women have essayed to explain it, only to find that it



remains incurably different from every other country. Most marked is this distinction in war time, when the English people who in the past have shown a unique facility for combining buccaneering exploits with crusading ethos, become Puritan in their phraseology again, convinced of the 'righteousness' of their cause, crusaders who are Cromwellian not only in speech but in spirit. This must be remembered of them, when, in the chaos of war's aftermath it will come to pass that many, having lost all that matters to them, will develop a philosophy of precariousness. This phase to come, will add to the number of apparent contradictions confronting those who want to write of England.

The best way to discover England is to go away from it.

## CHAPTER II

### FROM PARIS TO PROVENCE

PARTLY for the sake of his omelettes, but especially for the sake of himself and his family, whose talk was as satisfying as their cooking, I was a frequent customer at Mr. Villabella's restaurant in the Euston Road. It was as cosmopolitan as, but more stimulating than, any café I had known in Soho, and here from a war-troubled continent, Norwegian, Dutch, French, and Belgian refugees found their way and were solaced by the Villabella coffee. It was Mr. Villabella who sent me to Italy for the third time, for he was talking to a customer one evening of a rock village behind the Ligurian coast, and I could bear it no longer. Nomadic by nature I have contrived to spend all my holidays abroad, and with an ever-ready ear for a traveller's tale, would often choose a place for some stray story of it. So when I heard Mr. Villabella mention some happening on the Riviera di Levante, I marked it for my approaching holiday in the summer of 1937.

Returning to my attics in Bloomsbury after Mr. Villabella's talk of the hill town behind Porto Maurizio, I suddenly felt homesick. Not for Ireland, but for all the places I had ever been to, since that day in an Irish springtime when I had left the vistas of her hills and rivers and the leafy peace of her woods. Nearly everyone has the wanderlust at heart, and those who have it worse than others, and

who get in a fidgety fuss after being in one place for long, can always put it down to their natal horoscope. Such people are not always the best citizens, their suitcase habit prevents them from selling their labour except for short-term periods, and their mobility, however exciting and picturesque to themselves, can often give a lot of trouble to others.

In this moment's mood of gentle wistfulness, my mind turned back to a truant day when a slant of spring sunshine had struck the keys of my typewriter one morning in a London office. I knew it was time to leave. I had got on a bus, without any particular notion of where I would go, and looking up in Cockspur Street found myself among the shipping offices. Being no more free from the sign-and-omen custom than most people really are, and seeing the Canadian Pacific sign first, I told myself that my destiny lay there. And so it did. I applied for a job as ship's stenographer, and two weeks later a wire came telling me to present shorthand-typing and language certificates and to be ready to sail with the *Minnedosa*. The smart navy uniform, white collar and cuffs, titles on the shoulders, and neat little hat made you really feel a bit of the ship. I paid a flying visit home and felt in great form. Parting-time came and I went downstairs to see my Father. "Goodbye Poppie, I'm off to Canada." "Goodbye now," he growled affectionately from his chair, and went on reading. I went to the door. "Here, take this," he called. I came back, he gave me something and wouldn't let me thank him.

I went back to London and gave a merry breakfast party at Waterloo on the morning I left for Southampton. I hadn't a care in the world. At Southampton I went on board and down to the 3rd class Purser's

bureau, where my shipmates were, "Punch", a sharp-featured lively jester, never a minute still, and "Tubs", a man whose girth swamped most of our small office. There was a deal of grumbling and deal of good heart in him. One of my shipmates was disturbingly pretty, and her red hair a torment to more than one of the officers. You couldn't blame one of them for singing "So I sailed away to Kalgoorlie, and a red-haired woman was the wreck of me". Down to the Purser's office padded the Jews of all nations with their roly-poly walk and their brains that would no doubt change them from the shopkeepers in some Balkan village into the chain-store owners of a continent. Huddled in the hold with their bright bundles sat women with yellow wrinkled faces from the maize fields of Ruthenia, the stock farms of the Hortobágy, and small-town life of the *banats* of Jugoslavia. And then across the Atlantic and up the St. Lawrence, and great comfort in that cow, the first thing seen on land when we came up the river. Then the bridge near Quebec which the ship's masts were sure to strike, but of course never did; the calm of the wide river and its pasturelands till the granaries of Montreal towered above the quays. Then to find that Ireland was still here as everywhere, when you heard Connacht accents in the Dominion Parlour on a Saturday night where you went with a man on the *Montreal Star*, and had great gossip after, because there you had run into your shipmates whose partners were sailors from other ships.

And there was a visit alone to the Indian settlement at Chaunawaga up the river where for a service rendered, Grand Chief American Horse had initiated me into the Iroquois with ritual of eagle feathers. And on the way home I had gone into the little lime-

white Mission Church, and heard the red-frocked choir chanting in Iroquois from the *Ionterenniaientakwa Sonha Tsi Iaohasen*, their prayer book, and watched the women, some in bright clothes, some in black shawls, the girls with their long pointed fringe of sleek black hair, telling their beads. Sorry the day I said, that the Jesuits tamed these wild free people. But civilisation had made them the best bridge builders in that part of Canada. I was sorry I had signed on for the return trip, I wanted to stay with the Indians. But I went to many different places after that, and now in 1937 I was on my way to Paris and Porto Maurizio, with memories round me like a flock of birds.

I pulled out a long-tried suitcase and went to say goodbye to friends. Someone else in a flat below was doing the same thing; smacking kisses sounded up the stairs. "Goodbye Charlie, Goodbye Lil, Goodbye Ivy, goodbye all, send us a card Bert", and the door banged on another of the world's workers, off for a well-earned holiday. For the next two weeks he would, I hoped, be free from the bugs of Bloomsbury. Thankfully the *cimex lectularis* had not been seen in my attics, but I stopped someone once from completing the wish that my troubles might be small ones. There was nothing more wearing, more tear-reducing, than that search for "a clean cheap room" in cities, when every oil-shop man assured you that "we sell gallons of this in the summer" but each quart-bottle proved as ineffectual as the last, and you took on a carbolic-and-ammonia smell yourself, and your clothes were perfumed with paraffin.

Returning from my friends I got into bed and plugged my ears to keep out the foreign radio stations. There was no fear of over-sleeping (what

sleep you got was as often as not a nightmare) because the Amalgamated Milkbottles which drew up smartly outside the door saved the whole street their alarm clocks. I walked out with my suitcase in the morning, an unashamed escapist. For three weeks I would be free from the chinking, clinking of early milk bottles, the banging of doors by factory workers (who had all my sympathy for their early hours), the rattle-clattle of crockery, the goofing of the announcer's voice on the radio below, the clickety-clackety of the heels of Ivy as she walked about during various stages of her toilet, and on Sunday the hideous jungle of sound from radios, gramophones and dustbin lids, the bumping lumping and altogether indescribable noises of the lady overhead who was holystoning her floor, the strident voices of all the swarming life of the slums, horribly intensified in the hot weather, all the harsh, crude, ugly sounds, to which the proletariat is so insensible. Noises worse than their own they bore with indescribable fortitude when bombs rained on their cities.

In the boat train leaving from Victoria a row of plum-duff English people sat opposite me. It was puzzling to know why some English people did go abroad, unless it was because the English in general were too much for themselves and had to get away from it. At anyrate they were boxed up in a small island, so they spent their holidays in trains, travelling through countries where many of them still couldn't speak a word of the language. This linguistic impotence was also strange in a people under whose dominion was one-sixth of the earth, a people who were by tradition the greatest seafarers in the world, a people in whom the sea-sense was as strong in 1940 as it was in the days when Shakespeare, writing of

his island said "The sea is like a moat defensive to a house". It is fortunate for the rest of the world that the English language is an easy one, since the indifference of the average Briton to other languages has necessitated his own tongue being learnt by foreigners all over the earth.

Opposite the plum-duff people in the train sat a different lot of passengers. They ought not to have been travelling third at all, with all those expensive outdoor hobbies they were filling up the racks and floor with; it made me think of the jackdaw habits of their race, for no people on earth are given to collecting as the English are. That, I think, is what gives them that worried look, especially at stations. Compare an English crowd with an Irish crowd on a platform; the harassed faces of the English are caused by their belongings generally; the English love of possessions is an infallible mark of the race.

I never cross the English Channel to Calais without thinking that in those twenty-one miles there is as much difference between England and France as there is between England and Ireland, or between France and Spain. You could not in France easily find anything to correspond to "a party of English near-Buddhists led by an old lady, who entered China with the intention of ending their days in a lamaserie," as mentioned by Peter Fleming in *News from Tartary*. Nor could you find in France anything like the number of good works undertaken as public efforts in England by people who could not get on with others in their own homes. And you could not easily find in Spain women looking like little plump partridges as so many do in northern France.

This was the summer of 1937 when the political corruption of France, and her sane and splendid

civilisation, were never at greater contrast. All the weaknesses of her political structure were revealed, weaknesses however which are marks of a high degree of civilisation. Signs were not wanting even then that France might fall, a victim to internal rot, to the national failing of pessimism, to an inflexibility of mind on the part of her rulers, strangely at variance with the French virtue of logical thinking. For if ever the logic of circumstance demanded a resolute policy from Paris, it was in the last three years before the German hordes crashed through France's frontiers and swept over her land from Picardy to the Pyrenees (*Lebensraum* for a Nazi tribe with the brutish characteristics of their Neanderthal ancestors). The whole position had been complicated by the secret agreement made between France and Italy in 1935, giving Italy free military action in Abyssinia, and Paris had told London at that time that France would not enter a war against Italy. Britain, weak in arms as well as moral principle, and lacking support from France, embarked on a policy of inadequate sanctions and, from the breakdown of the principle of Collective Security, was destined to see herself become in 1940 an island garrison against a Hitler-Europa.

Not for want of warning did Britain come to this pass : the writings of Mme. Tabouis alone would have been enough to raise goose-flesh on a goliath. And as a political prophetess Mme. Tabouis had serious rivals in the Astrologers Royal of the Great British Press. Even such oracles as Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells had to share honours with the seers whose forecasts from the heavens were so eagerly awaited each week by the Great British Public. In the land of John Blunt, *Disease* was enthroned. How different that public was to become two years later ! The



decent kindly English people, so patiently enduring the hardships of war, tolerant and trustful to the hour of its outbreak, they had little time then for watching the heavens for anything but enemy planes.

I thought of the English public again, after driving to the Exhibition across Paris with its unchanging smell of chocolate blended with perfume. The world expenditure on armaments in 1937 was astronomically reckoned, but on the pylon at the entrance to the Exposition, you saw the words of Aristide Briand :

*Il n'y a pas une paix de l'Europe et une paix de l'Amérique : il y a une paix du monde entier.*

There was Peace in our time O Lord in the British pavilion ; here alone there was, in that unpretentious little building, temporary peace and security, there were still games to play while shells shrieked death. I walked from the tennis courts of England to the battlefields of Spain, where Prieto's macabre paintings, more ghoulish than pictures of the Inquisition or scenes from Grand Guignol, took me back to the country where I had seen the storm crash the year before, and Luna's terrific canvas of Badajoz was a tale more truly told than so many of the propaganda pamphlets in England. Souto, Molina, Eduardo Vicente, had left unforgettable pictures of the agony of Spain. Others were definitely propagandist, Marxist in appeal. If a revolution meant that the workers would have control as well as ownership of production, the sooner there was world revolution the better, but no revolution yet, not even the Russian one, had given the workers control, and without that, what availed ownership ? "I hate the peasant, that reactionary brute," said Lenin, but wisely he gave them land. In one picture

in the Paris Exhibition I saw the reflection of a revolutionary movement of recent times which was directed by the peasants themselves. It was a picture of men reaping in Catalunya in 1936 ; there one saw in the free, spontaneous, rural communes, the birth of something fine and beautiful, something which, had it not been brutally crushed, might have shown the world how life could be lived with the dignity and liberty that are man's natural rights.

Though I realised that no ruling class in the world knew better than the British how to wear the velvet glove over the iron hand, I knew too, from many travels, that the British system (save in its relations with Indian National Congress and in black patches like Northern Ireland<sup>1</sup>) was no longer imperialistic ; the free federation of the British Commonwealth was something much further evolved, infinitely more enlightened, than any imperialism. I knew too that England even with its black areas was one of the best countries in the world to live in. Her social services had for long been in advance of those in nearly every other country ; chastened by her trials she was the land to which refugees from Germany and Central Europe first turned after 1936, and the things which the best of England cherishes are things worth dying for. Even if we regard the last line as an extravagance, few of us will deny that *Restored Allegiance* by Sir William Watson, taken from his *Ver Tenebrosum*, has a more apt reference to 1941 than to the decade when it was written :

<sup>1</sup> Neither the British people, broad and large, nor their Premier, Churchill, stood for the despotism of the Stormont junta, backed by a small and rapidly dwindling oligarchic clique in Britain which maintained a tyranny in the Six Counties partitioned from the rest of Ireland.

*"Dark is thy trespass, deep be thy remorse,  
 O England! Fittingly thine own feet bleed,  
 Submissive to the purblind guides that lead  
 Thy weary steps along this rugged course.  
 Yet . . . when I glance abroad, and track the source  
 More selfish far, of other nations' deed,  
 And mark their tortuous craft, their jealous greed,  
 Their serpent-wisdom or mere soulless force,  
 Homeward returns my vagrant fealty,  
 Crying 'O England, shouldst thou one day fall,  
 Shattered in ruins by some Titan foe,  
 Justice were thenceforth weaker throughout all  
 The world, and Truth less passionately free,  
 And God the poorer for thine overthrow' ".<sup>1</sup>*

Outside in the Paris Exhibition grounds, from disdainful height, the German 'Eagle turned its head away from its opposite number, the Russian youth and girl who were telling the world that they were free. But the swastika and the sickle were yet to fly together when the Russo-German Pact was signed in August 1939. I walked back to the British pavilion. There was mock-modesty about that deliberately different, unassuming-looking, odd-shaped little building. It was more arrogant with its shop-window of racquets and rods than were the soaring towers of Germany and Russia. You can all fight, with weapons or words, you silly idiots, but we can afford to play tennis. It was however the arrogance of defence if you looked deeper, because the number of snubs received by H.M. Government, from the time Herr Greiser made cocksnooks at the League delegates in conference at Geneva, was a record that would make the generation of Kipling turn in its grave.

<sup>1</sup> From *The Remains of Sir William Watson, 1878-1935*. George G. Harrap and Co., Ltd.

You could stand in this Exhibition and it might come to you as it did in Paris to Ella Maillart after her trek from Peiping to Kashmir: "Suddenly I understood something. I felt now, with all the strength of my senses and intelligence, that Paris, France, Europe, the White Race, were nothing. The something that counted in and against all particularisms was the magnificent scheme of things that we call the world." To walk through the Pavilions of all nations at the world's greatest fair, was to be stabbed with the memories of many places. Málaga, once beautiful, a city of the dead in 1937. Miguel five and Pepe three, laughing little sun-tanned rogues, games up and down the quay, the anarchist fishermen at Torre Molinos singing malagueñas out on the blue-bright bay, white walls, roses and roses, swifts flicker overhead. Sky-devils swoop, fiends mocking, that for you, and that for you, "and *bueno*, why not?" Away far north to maize fields in green valleys, the creak of bullock carts, skies all amber and mauve, shadowy hills. Play "haurak ikhasazue" and dance, little Basque boys in the Plaza, it may be the last time. "And *bueno*, why not?"

No, I could not go back to Spain. But there were other memories that brought no pain as yet. A way-side café in Tarascon on a sleepy summer day at sundown, a table in the open, looking over the wide flowing Rhone, a strolling player thrumming on a guitar a song of Old Provence. It is hard to talk dispassionately of France if you are near Francophile, but there have been joyous days in Rhineland, and there is no city in Europe where I can recapture the thrill of the first moments there, as in the old Frankish city of Aachen. I have gone on foot through villages with Celtic names between the Eifel and the Ardennes,

living as a vegetarian because I can't eat Belgian meat, and have found the finest air between the Alps and Kerry at Hockai. I have dossed in Antwerp and Prague, but 'I have found the dirtiest bed-linen 'in a certain hostel in the Schwarzwald.

'I have seen the spring flowers above Lake Geneva turn the green slopes into a painter's palette, and have watched the czárdás danced in the court of an inn away out on the plains of Debreczen and heard the oath of a Transylvanian gipsy fiddler when he broke a string. I have been eaten up with bugs in an inn in sub-Carpathian Russia after the most deliciously cooked supper under the acacia trees in a court which was the meeting place of Czechs, Slovaks, Poles, Magyars, Ruthenians, Rumanians, two Germans, and some gypsies from Bukovina. I have made a gaffe in a kosher restaurant in Ławôczne, on the borders of pre-1939 Poland and Ruthenia, by asking for milk with my coffee while there was flesh-food on the table. There are memories of twelve-hour waits at fly-blown stations all over south-eastern Europe, and of idle hours fishing round the reeds on Lake Balaton, and rattling in bullock carts with peasants at five in the morning towards the misty blue rim of the Carpathians you never reached. Then the long solitude of Baltic summers, the sickening sight of a man being beaten up by Nazis near the Gängeviertel, the workers' quarter of Hamburg." Terror of night coming down on the Dolomites when climbing Monte Cristallo alone; sweat of horror and the unforgettable shock to innocence when, a young fool, I had gone tip the sidestreets off the Vieux Port in Marseilles and been accosted by a gap-toothed Jezabel who had blackened the whites of her eyes. Echoes of Jewish prayers from a synagogue in the Kazimierck, once the ghetto

of Krakow, huddled houses, smells from Jewish stores, boys with long side-curls, fine-featured, curly-bearded Jews in kaftans, short men with long trunks, long teeth, arched backs, flat feet. Not the feminine-contoured fleshy Jews of England.

Pictures of people and places continued to flash in and out of my mind as I wandered through the Exhibition in this summer of 1937. And then I left Paris for Provence.

Nou-gat, Nou-gat, of Mon-té-li-mar called the white-coated blue-capped girl, and woke me from a sun-drowsy sleep in the Paris-Marseilles rapide. Woke me to life in Provence once more. And then the sea flashed blue at Marseilles where in this July of 1937 they were setting up new coastal guns and tripling the anti-aircraft defences. In this Saharan summer the hinterland of Marseilles was African in its drought, the parched hill of Caspiane and the glare of the white, flat-roofed houses made this quarter of the city more like a fragment of French Africa. Then came Toulon, as decorous as its neighbour Marseilles was wanton. Toulon, where the Phœnicians worked their Tyrian dyes, the town called Telo Martius by the Romans because Mars, lover of blood, was patron too of the crimson dye. Blood in plenty had flowed in that city when Napoleon's artillery pounded the English forces who were helping the besieged. For Toulon being in no mind to share the fate of other towns in Provence which had known the Jacobin terror, had closed its gates to the revolutionaries. But in vain. Napoleon's guns smashed the defences of the citizens, and when the English squadron was withdrawn, the revolutionaries hacked and slaughtered their way through the town. But the whole history of this beautiful coast of Provence has been a chronicle of bloody battles.

On my travels I always make sooner than later for a port, and so it was that I got out of the train at Toulon. My hotel window looked on to the Place de la Liberté, that square of palms and fountains and golden gravel; it was all so very like the Plaza in Seville where I had stayed in 1936 on the outbreak of the civil war in Spain, but I was in no mood for such memories. And anyhow, who would not enjoy Toulon for its own sake? There was the Place Puget, cool with the climbing greenery of its fountain, and shady with its plane trees. Best of all the Quai Kronstadt, because here were the seamen, whose world is a wide one, and in the Grand Bar Nautique there was talk in many tongues. Many dialects too, as sailors from Brest to Toulon drank their Pernod in that café. A crowd of them came ashore from a battleship; I got into talk with one, a Breton, and wasn't surprised when he said he came from Douarnenez; he looked what he was, a Bigaudin. His people in that wild part are, with their Mongolian features still a puzzle to ethnologists. And for all the world Pierre Cornic looked a Tartar. He was ferocious when we spoke of Germany, a yellow gleam shot over his brown glinting eyes as he told me of what he and his mates would do to any Germans they got hold of when war came. It was clear that the Maginot Line divided the civilised from the barbarians. I didn't stop his terrible talk, for the civilisations of the Mediterranean, whatever tyrannies they might temporarily succumb to, would always flourish anew. But the Germans would for long bow to their gods of the northern darkness.

It is certain too that Latins understand much better than Teutons, the art of living. Partly because they give food its proper place, and that is one of the

best of blessings you will 'agree, if you eat a Toulon special of mussels with melted butter and herb sauce. One can pity the man who has the palate of the rich and the purse of the poor if he lives in England. The English as everyone knows are Goths in the matter of food, unaware of all the care that has gone to the making of a dish, unappreciative of its subtler flavours. It is a gastronomic offence to eat ravioli made by an English cook once you have tasted the real thing in Provence. Because in Provence it is baked with anchovies done to a paste, and mixed with garlic and olives and tomatoes. Similarly to a Provencal palate, English "stuffed tomatoes" would be pitifully flat after the Toulon specimens whose centres are pulped with egg, chopped onions, spinach, bread-crumbs, and then cooked in oil and placed in the tomato 'shells'.

The sailor from Douarnenez said he would meet me in Berlin, "when we Frenchmen have wiped out every German devil—ah you shall see what we will do! In 1914 they said that they would cut off our noses and throw them to the pigs, and our women". His tale of horrors became unprintable. And in 1940 I searched for that sailor among the crews from Brest who brought their ships in to Plymouth rather than submit to the German armistice terms.

I left my ferocious friend to walk to the Arsenal, where once the galley slaves sweated and fainted under the lash of their task-masters. Lady Blessington (daughter of the Tipperary rebel-hunting squireen "Shiver the Frills"), whose tales of travel since she left her native Knockbritt were all the talk of her time, visited 'les Galleriens', these galley slaves, in 1822. "Our humanity was not a little shocked at beholding the large staples attached to the foot of each bed for



fastening the chains of the convicts, so that even in sleep they feel the galling fetters of slavery" she wrote. "The great number of these unhappy men are linked by couples; those sentenced for life are distinguished by green cloth caps, and the whole are dressed in a brick coloured cloth". And she went on to say that these chained couples often quarrel violently, and then are treated as dogs would be. She saw the men spinning "who use wheels similar to those common to Ireland", and she watched them at work on the treadmill.

On the morning when I left Toulon for Cannes, the train was filled with organised travel parties which seemed to represent all sorts of 'Causes'. The number of humanitarian societies in a country whose treatment of subject peoples had sometimes earned it censure, was one of the many paradoxes about English people. The causes themselves too, they were generally quite rational—kindness to animals certainly was—but why was it that the followers of these causes were so often peculiar people? This travelling in bunches on the part of a people notably individualistic was not such a paradox about the English as might at first be imagined. The English have the group-instinct well developed; they have grown out of the herd-mind. There is a lot to be said for the English way of travelling collectively; it means a sharing of experience, to travel alone is the more selfish way. Travel alone and you stand a better chance of getting corner seats which you would be ashamed to aim for every time if you were with a party. Travel alone and you can miss a train without being torn to pieces by "the party". Travel alone and you will never once hear that word "programme". An adventurous friend of mine once went on an

organised tour. None of her other friends would believe it till she showed them a scurrilous note sent her by a member of the party because of those tubs in the Fair of Montmartre long ago. The ones that used to spin round two ways with a pole in the middle, like a ball of wool with a knitting-needle and an orange with a candle, to prove the earth's axis. It was a movement fraught with danger, any moment you might be thrown into the arms of the person next you. The trouble was that the tubs of Montmartre were not on the programme and my friend was seen in a tub.

To go by rail from Toulon to Cannes along the Fréjus route, is to follow a branch of the great Aurelian Way. In and out of the blue-grey calcareous rocks of Provence are towns which have grown up on the road that once took Italy into Gaul. A Provencal would tell you that the Department of Bouches-du-Rhône, and no other region, is Provence. So that in speaking here of certain places as Provencal even as far east as the Var, it will be understood that I do so only in the widest sense of the word. ~~From~~ Marseilles up to Fréjus, whether you took the inland or the coastal route, you found the countryside had many characteristics of the Provincia of Roman times, and the Var region right through remained Provencal in life and language. What a theme for poets, those towns with music in their names like Lavandou, with its lavender hills, Napoule, once Neapolis; Sylvabelle, Tamaris, Aiguebelle, Arluc that was Ara-luci; Boulouris, Auribeau and Ollioules. All had their tale of the Roman legions, even the coquettish little town of Ciotat was once a Roman port, and the slaves of the conquering cohorts worked the coral reefs at Cassis. Cavelaire had its memories

of Carthage and of Hercules long before the Romans made it a colony, long before the barbarians of the fifth century broke in from the north on Provence.

All along this part of the tideless Mediterranean are natural harbours and sandy pine-coves called *calanques*, but there are as well innumerable sandbars due to the deposit brought down by rivers. Out on the sea are the *bettes*, flat-bottomed boats with a great spread of sail, lateen mainsail, and there too pass the *tartanes*, barge-like boats which have been the trade-ships of the Mediterranean for centuries.

Between Toulon and Les Arcs is the sombre chain of the Maure mountains. It is not surprising that Maure has been confused with 'Moor', as the Moors settled here till the tenth century; it was their last footing in Provence. But Maure is 'Maurou', the Provencal word for 'dark'; Aleppo pines and belts of cork-oak deepen the umber and purple of these Maure mountains. But on the plain below lie silver olives, red earth, white farms, tender shoots waving bright green. And those rounded granite hills of the Maures themselves are only dark from a distance. Climbing them I found that their old crystalline rocks sparkle like quartz and mica, ruby-red or many-coloured, and that the cork-oak, belting their slopes, is red when the bark is stripped. This tree is not found round Toulon because it will not grow on limestone. On this Maure chain too, which is geologically separate from the other mountain systems, are mulberry trees for silkworms, and date, gum trees, chestnuts, also the leathery leaves of the caïob, the locust tree whose pods John the Baptist ate for their sweet juice. Down below on the coast at Tamaris are the tallest eucalyptus trees in the world; according to the learned botanist Dr. Strassburger, one, as tall

as the towers of Köln cathedral, reached 500 ft., and could look down on the dome of St. Peter's at Rome.

To travel by train from Ciotat to Cannes was to run through a lovely landscape garden. We passed Arluc with its Cyclopean walls, where the Roman senators and consuls set up their villas; they chose pleasant places, those rational hedonists. None more pleasant perhaps than Fréjus, though in 1937 it was the nearest thing to a dead city which I had seen. Like Arles it had town walls, theatre, baths and forum, and the great arch of the Porta Romana, but how different it was now in spirit from Arles! In Arles modern life has grown up out of the ancient things, but Fréjus was a town of the past. Once it was the chief centre of the Ligurian tribe of Oxybians, then in turn the Phœnicians, Phœcean Greeks, and Romans stamped it with their cultures. Seaward lies the lagoon of Argens, once the home-station and the headquarters of the Roman fleet of Mediterranean Gaul. But the Romans were no sailors, and for trading they never spread a sail if they could use a road. Agricola who conquered Britain was born at Fréjus, and like his fellow Romans did in Provence, he gave Britain her roads. To the Roman conquerors Provence owes much of her system of communications today, for the roads were planned for transport in Provincia and the routes have changed but little since the days of Cæsar Augustus. If the Romans gave Provence its roads, the Greeks brought to it the cultivation of vine and olive; they gave it the Golden Goat, the Pan of Arcady, its temples, and its pastoral life. The Arabs added their saffron and rice, the mulberry, the date palm, and irrigation, till the parched land flowed with water from their windmills.

Past olive mills by streams, and old red-roofed houses, the train went on to Cannes by St. Tropez which was once a Saracen sea. Cannes, the pleasure place of millionaires up to 1939, was once visited by that austere saint, Patrick, Apostle of the Irish. There was no Miramar, no Carlton, no Majestic there in his time. Nor did he, the Roman-Briton Patricius, see the exotic Palm Beach or the Pyjama Playground. He certainly never saw the Casino, and he little knew that one far-off day in the ancient church on the hill, high above the twisting streets of the Old Town, they would raise a statue to him and, somewhat incorrectly perhaps, but no less devotedly for that, carve the shamrock on St. Patrick's mitre. It is a far day from the time when Ligurian pirates made Le Suquet in the Old Town their stronghold. From high on the terrace of Notre Dame de l'Espérance I could see French cruisers far out, white, like floating icebergs. Inland the hillsides were dotted with the ugly villas that have disfigured Cannes much more than Nice. The Estérel mountains, legendary home of the fairy enchantress Estérelle, glowed wine-gold in the sunset, and purple shadows were flung across their red rocks. These volcanic rocks are the most primitive on the coast and their very colour reminds you of their fiery origin. Fiery too the ordeal of the peasants on their slopes when Charles V entering Provence with his armies, set flame to the forests, forcing the natives to face these or the fire of the emperor's troops.

In their doorways down the tall twisting street in Le Suquet, women sat mending nets. The harbour was full of *tartanes*, Mediterranean craft with a Genoese rig, bringing olive oil, perfumes and soap from Grasse, and there were ships from Scandinavia loading cork-dust from the bark of the Maure forests. The scene,

but for the cruisers which were in 1937 ever at the ready, was peaceful enough then. But in March the mistral sweeps the skies clear of cloud, and in summer the sirocco blows with a fury. Spring is the time for Cannes, when the gold-dust of mimosa follows the dark-crowned finely channelled lemon narcissus, and early golden orchids bloom on the Estérel. The silver wattle palm, and acacias, the pepper tree with its airy feathery foliage and pink berry clusters will be followed by the flowering agaves and the lovely amaryllis, the fringed cup lily.

Walking through the flower market, a colour glory with its carnations and gladioli, I wondered how the old men sitting at the tables of the Carlton could be concerned with cards on such an evening. The municipal casino for bacarat at Cannes had stakes as high as anywhere in the world, and in this was different from Monte Carlo, which was the place for games of chance like roulette and trente-et-quarante. On the garish Palm Beach strutted Mexican millionaires, Argentine Jews with their mistresses, the gigolos of various countries, and other signs of modern "civilisation". Was there really much advancement from the days when Cannes was Egekana, Ligurian capital of the Oxybians? The "savage tribes" of the Oxybii had their forts all along the Ligurian coast. And the last thing I had seen on leaving Dover was the balloon barrage of the Britons. Twentieth century man was no nearer resolving his conflicts by means other than war, than he was any number of centuries before the coming of the Prince of Peace.

The Ligurians have baffled ethnologists just as the Basques, with whom they may have some language affinity, have done. They can be traced in the place-

names with 'asca', and I have wondered whether this shows kinship with the 'Oscòs' races of whom the Basques are one. The Ligurians are the oldest people on the Mediterranean as they have been on this coast for three thousand years. They emerged from the troglodyte days of their caverns to a pastoral life, and their terraced cultivation suggests that they were a non-Aryan people. Then they had to meet the waves of Greeks from the east, the first from Phocæa, the Ionian city in the Gulf of Smyrna. But the Greeks who made the Athenian festivals in their olive groves were at home in Liguria when they found the sacred grottoes of the Oxybii. The Ligurians of the hill villages with their loose tribal organisation were no match for the Romans, though they fought fiercely everywhere, as they did against the Celtic invaders from the north. But probably at no time in the history of Cannes did the natives suffer more than in 1746, when the troops of the Irish-Austrian General, Maximilian Ulysses Browne, behaved with such ferocity that Provence still repeats the saying "it will go one day, even the Germans did." It was a saying that Provençals remembered in 1940.

Juan les Pins, a short ride from the Croisette of Cannes, was, when I saw it in the following summer of 1938, a compact, band-boxy little town, far too commonplace for its harbour which is one of the finest on the Mediterranean. Its beach was divided between the pinky-white and peeling skins of Englishers, and the durable tan and firmer flesh of the Latin visitors and natives. Why is it that the English so often look indecent in undress and other peoples so rarely do? Into Golfe Juan sailed the great ships of France that morning, the gulf where Napoleon had landed on his escape from Elba in 1815. But no one

on that sparkling summer morning was thinking of "old unhappy far-off things and battles long ago". Everyone was making the most of the last sandy beach which this coast offers until you reach Alaisio. Behind were the foothills with wild wood-lavender, jasmin, white gallium, black garlic, and the villa walls were cascades of bougainvillea, buddleia, and roses. In August the woods are white with myrtle flower, and in the winter months all Juan is golden with mimosa. As they have cut down most of the pines in the town, its name is rather a misnomer now. It stands at the head of Golfe Juan, which is said to derive from 'Gourdjan', 'Gour' being the Ligurian word for a gulf, and 'djan' has been attributed to the Saracens.

Vallauris, near Juan les Pins, is so called from its Roman name of Valle Aurea, the pottery town, where the Romans found the natives making jars from the clay by the stream that runs into the gulf. Something harder than pottery was being made near Vallauris in the summer of 1938. Munitions were being piled up on the Côte d'Azur as in the industrial north. At the time when communists were proclaiming the class-consciousness of the proletariat of all nations, the workers of the world were busily making bombs to blow each other to bits. This because, by economic compulsion, they were only concerned with their immediate needs. "Why are you exporting so much iron-ore to Germany?" I asked a French waiter in Juan les Pins. "In 1936 Premier Blum forbade the export of ore, used for making shells, and now your miners have actually pressed your Government to lift the ban, and French workers are sending ore to Germany, a potential enemy, at the rate of 700,000 tons a month."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Soviet Russia too, in 1940, was supplying Nazi Germany with more raw materials for Hitler's war than Russia could afford from her own resources. Russian imports were actually increased to meet Germany's war needs.



"Yes, it's absurd on the face of it" he answered, "but 30,000 of our miners have either got to feed Germany's war potential or be faced with unemployment." At the same time, he went on, the fact that the German workers ever allowed such a régime as Nazism to drive them to threaten by arms their French comrades, seemed a betrayal not only of socialism but of the whole working class. "With their huge population and greater organising ability than any other people, the Germans had a better chance to resist conditions which they knew must lead to war, than any other people had" said the waiter. "Do you think that we would not show a more resolute spirit of resistance than the Germans have done?"

I was to recall his words on July 10th, 1940, the day that the Senate and Chamber of Deputies voted away France's Constitution. I was to recall then too, what Anatole France wrote in 1915 :

"For me, were I told that Frenchmen were suffering themselves to be seduced by the veiled phantasm of a villainous peace, I would petition our Parliament to brand as *traitor* to our country any man who should propose to treat with the enemy so long as the foe still occupies a portion of our territory and that of Belgium."

How apposite were these words written twenty-five years earlier, to the situation on July 10th, 1940. On that day the French Republic died. From that day France passed into bondage. For on a black page of French history it was decreed that "The National Assembly gives all powers to the Government of the Republic under the signature and authority of Marshal Pétain, President of the Council, in effect promulgating by one or more acts a new Constitution of the

French State, which must guarantee the rights of Labour, Family and Fatherland." The land which had bled for *Liberté, Egalité and Fraternité*, became a vassal State of the most ruthless tyranny of all time. France, the great mother of exiles, who had opened her arms to, and taken to her generous heart, White Russians, Red Spaniards, Czechs, Poles, Austrians, Germans, Dutch, and Belgians, France had now delivered these, her foster-children, along with her own people, into the hands of the persecutor. But as sure as night followed day, France would rise again. The despot's heel would bruise her body, but it would never crush her soul.

One afternoon I went from Juan to La Valette, at the foot of the limestone hills of Faron and Coudon. A little place typically Provencal with its *platains* in the square, where the long-headed olive-skinned coast folk with the limbs of ancient Greeks were watching the men playing *pétanque*. This is a Provencal game of metal balls, a form of bowls, and whenever you walked down a street in any town along the Côte d'Azur (that is, along the Riviera from the Estérel mountains to Mentone), and you heard a succession of peculiar 'clicking' sounds, you might know that in some court the good game of *pétanque* was being played out. Briefly, the winner of the last game throws in a metal ball, the other players roll their own towards this and try to knock each other's throws away from the 'goal' ball.

La Valette was like a hundred other small towns on the Mediterranean, in its heartfelt love of freedom. Only when you have lived in the towns, especially the ports of this seaboard, do you understand the real meaning of anarchism. Those of us who are always feeling for civilisation behind the grafted things, will

in these once-Greek towns of the Riviera, find that satisfying marriage of Greek and classical order with a native anarchism. And beside it the theoretical revolutionary expression of our northern lands is very dull stuff.

I started to climb Mont Faron to look down on that sea which has carried civilisations from one continent to another, marked today by that chain of little white towns which, for all their changing history, are still Greek in feeling, Latin in clarity of thought. Blue as a sparkling sapphire the Mediterranean stretched beyond Hyères with its Golden Isles to the east. Far above me an old man in a bright blue shirt toiled at his vineyard ; I thought how this care of the earth's fruits had helped to make the Mediterranean civilisations. Olives shivered silver down to La Valette. I struck a dead-red road which curved round to a house, yellow-washed, vine-covered. An old woman with grace in her movements and the beauty that so many Provencal women keep to the end of their days, was rooting out weeds among the vines. I was going to ask her for a drink from the well there, when a ferocious-looking dog with a savage bark sprang in my direction. Just as I am a thorough-going coward with wild-eyed dogs in Ireland, so I become a cringing creature when one appears in Provence. Cursing myself for my cowardice I doubled round the corner and never saw the old lady again. Rather the furze and jagged limestone I said, as I plunged about in an effort to add distance to myself and that dog, skinning my stockings and ricking a foot. Then counting on its being too hot for the dog to chase me far, I dropped on the turf and began day-dreaming. A bee stung me to life. It is a great place for bees.

When I had regained my self-respect, that is to say when I knew the dog, the bees, and I, were safely parted, I looked again over cypresses and pines and feathery tamarisks to the Golden Isles. And then to Hyères, its rich plain nearly sheltered from the mistral that blasts most other things here, including the exotic vegetation of the Golden Isles. Hyères with its coral islands was the land of the Massiliots, who liked it well enough to name it Olbia, "the blessed". Coming from the west, you will see the date-palm for the first time and on the rock slopes of Hyères find the Barbary figs. But you will not find in this tourist town the idiom of Provence, the rich heritage of native ideas, as you will in Valette, the town at the foot of Faron. The twin hills of Coudon and Faron can be stiff climbs on a hot afternoon, and with joints rusty from city life one could not envy those whose work it was to light the beacons on these mountains in days gone by. The name Faron is from the Low Latin for a watch-tower, and on this hill was one beacon of a chain which burned along the whole Provencal coast to warn of pirates and raiders. There is one section of people who have never known unemployment here in all their long history, and that is the coastguards. They have been too busy watching the Phœcean fleets, the purple sails of the Roman *trirèmes*, the Genoese galleys, the pirate crews of Barbarossa, Mussolini's cruisers, and in 1941 the British Fleet. Faron flew the tricolour when Napoleon's soldiers hoisted their flag here in 1793, and the revolutionary violence at that time led to a general massacre of the people of Toulon, who implored the English to take them on board when their squadrons sailed away. No country so lovely has had so bloody a history as Provence, attacked in turn by Phœcean

Greeks and Romans, then by the onrush of the Goths and Visigoths, followed by the Lombard furies who sacked and stormed, then came the raids of Saracens, later the fighting between Francis I and Charles V. There followed the terrors of the French Revolution, and the wars between France and Italy in most of which Provence was ravaged.

I made tracks for La Valette again, passing on the lower slopes Provencal farms, buff with green shutters, where Vallauris jars stood outside the house-door, and thought of Vallauris where they once worshipped the golden calf. In the autumn on the older-customed farms they would still tread the grape. The greenery of vines in spite of the long rainless seasons, had astonished me when I first came south; there was little manure either to produce such vegetation, because there were not enough horses in Provence for that, and the sun is too fierce for many chemical manures. Cypresses and olives spread belts of dark and silver-green across the red soil above Valette. It is often said that the Greeks brought the olive to Provence and Liguria, but it is really a native tree. The Greeks however were the first to cultivate it. The olive harvest is in January to February, when the peasants knock the fruit down on to mats with bamboo poles; three months later small pale scented yellow flowers appear. The olive trees in Provence are lower on the whole than those on the Italian Riviera, as it is a custom in so many places in France to prune them so that the fruit can be picked by hand. Once olives marked boundaries, and from "extra oleas vagari", "to wander beyond the olives", we get our phrase "to go out of bounds".

My stony scramble down to Valette was slow, not only because it was steep, but because there was so

much to see on the ground, trap-door spiders' nests, covered with a viscous substance; downy-shrouded chrysalids, Orange Tips, and Red Admirals among the brilliant butterflies, tree-heather from which briar pipes are made. Down in Valette again a shop sign caught my eye. It was a harness-maker's, and the name was Marius Quarantti. You were back in Roman times, and in the Latin books of schooldays. But the very Provencal tongue itself is Low Latin spoken with a Celtic accent, and the vowel-sounds (as they are in French) remain Gaulish-Celtic. And it might be that you were eating a dish whose recipe was two thousand years old, when at a little café in the plane-shaded square, you had the *real* bouillabaisse of crayfish, cooked in white wine with laurel leaves, garlic and saffron.

The wash of wind through the pines could not drown the ceaseless love cries of "kirikkik" made by the *cigale*, and by this same token you may know you are in Provence. Was not the *cigale*, creature of sunshine, adopted by Mistral and his fellow poets as the emblem of their little band, the *Félibres*? And the sun-songs of the *ciuda* are inseparable from one's memories of Provence, whose intense provincialism is perpetual reminder of its old Roman name *Provincia*, a region so finely endowed with native culture, with classical form, and with a virile people dowered with the best of gifts, a rich and utterly native humour. A region where the people are so distinct that the contrast between a Provençal and a Parisian is greater even than between a Galician and an Andalusian.

In a hall near the little town square I saw a Provencal play. Its theme was simple, the love of a fisherman of the Camargue for a *gardian's* daughter. It was a tragedy of the sea, and for intensity, for starkness,

it was not second to Synge's *Riders to the Sea*. The man who spoke the prologue, spoke of the need to foster national culture, of popular tradition in Provencal plays. But in 1938, how could one speak of a "national" drama, or even of national consciousness, when this was denied to all save those who, by force of numbers and by technique of terrorism, were striding towards world domination? The recognition of Brittany and other regions of France as separate "States" by the German conquerors of France in 1940, deceived no one into regarding this procedure as the fulfilment of true "Self-determination for small nations". Especially after the German Diktat which in restoring to Hungary much of her former territory in Transylvania, also passed on to her more than a million Rumanians, who placed little faith in the opting clause in the Vienna Award. "Self-determination!" That cry heard so insistently in 1920, was as likely to be fulfilled in 1940 as Hitler was likely to eat his beans in a Kosher restaurant or to join the Peace Pledge Union.

## CHAPTER III

### THREE FREE AND HANSE CITIES

THE summer of 1937 was a season when the travel agencies were making the most of what time was left to them. Each was outbidding the other for the number of places they would show their clients in a week, indeed the all-round heightening tempo showed itself never more plainly than with the tourist companies, so that a traveller might have noted in his diary on a date in 1937 : " At Victoria I caught sight of Our Courier easily recognisable by the seasonable emblem worn in the peak of his cap (a bulb at Eastertime indicates that Holland has been chosen for the Mystery Tour. By Quirke's Day-Tour Détour Programme, passengers fly to Paris by *Rocket* enabling them to gain a *coup d'oeil* of Paris Night Life. From here plane swings sharp right and heads for Milan, grazing Cathedral and allowing just time for a stone souvenir of spire. Passengers can be dropped here and conveyed via Alexandria to the Pyramids (hammers and chisels packed with lunch baskets provided by Quirke), making détour of desert where a Sheik awaits party, time being allowed for a brief handshake by each member. Thence to Cape and descent by parachute (those who wish to descend via Victoria Falls can make use of "Cylinda", Quirke's tested tube-shooter). Quirke's Camels (racing breed) will transport members across Sahara, and back to Cairo in time for lunch.



Those who welcome an element of risk in their travels, are recommended to take Quirke's extended tour to China, an expedition so adventurous that those joining it are advised to Li-Lo or they may Hang-Hi. Returning by air the party will reach Croydon again by 7.43 the next morning."

I wasn't going quite so far as Quirke's clients myself; I was bound for Bremen. It was a cold grey day when I reached the city, and that vast expanse of glass at the end of the roof, striking a segment across the station, seemed on such a day in keeping with the character of Bremen. The cold grey glass, below which the wind drove up the platform, brought a picture of the haven at the mouth of the Weser, for Bremen was after all only half of Bremen; it was Bremerhaven which kept "the Free and Hanse City" still pre-eminent in commerce, until the summer of 1940, when British bombing made the docks a furnace. On this windy day the harbour was grey and chrome; a dull waste of muddy water with waves roughed by winds from all directions, spread to the sea beyond the ugly chrome buildings of the Norddeutsche Lloyd. The *Columbus* was alongside; up the gangway ship's crew passed at intervals, a stewardess, a hairdresser, a fireman, assistant purser, trimmer. The fine ship, Germany's largest liner, was to meet an inglorious end in December 1939, when to escape capture by British naval forces she was scuttled by her own crew.

Turning behind the Tiefer in Bremen I saw some of the city's oldest streets. Clean and quiet as a small Dutch town was the Stavendamm, where a little old house, white with green shutters, blue piping, steep roof had, right across its front, the painting of a ship on the high seas. The Schlachte in this quarter is the oldest wharf on the Weser, mentioned in documents

in 1250. Here were the splendid shipping warehouses, once the homes of patrician merchants, and along the Tiefer between the shady lindens you could see the ships that had sailed the seven seas and come home to the Free and Hanse City of Bremen.

Across the quiet came the crisp, precise tramp of youthful marchers, all drilled in the worship of their Leader, a pathological enormity, sufferer from compulsion-neurosis, megalomaniac. To other millions Adolf Hitler was the personification of that Evil which men have been told to resist, but he was Number One of a mighty large gang of sadistic thugs and power-maniacs, reversions to Neanderthal type, low-grade man. Indeed the German expansion-urge is fundamentally a concern for the biologist rather than the historian. The small marchers tramped on, theirs not to reason why. An Englishwoman beside me was full of pity. "They like it" I said. "They are proud to belong to a system in which there is something inherently wrong when such a word as 'totalitarian' had to be invented for it." That marching expressed the genius of Germany. I have always thought that in one of his great works Bach, as much as Wagner, expresses the German soul. The Sixth Brandenburg Concerto with its repetitive theme, its marching rhythm, does it not suggest the dynamism, the work-for-work's-sake in a laborious, pushing people?

In the Ratskeller with its enormous casks, its Bacchus and Rose cellars with the ancient vintages of Rudesheim, gathered the boys of Bremen. In the Senate Room for centuries the City Fathers met in joyous carousal. Here they fared bountifully, lived merrily in their time and today they were dead. But in that room were the Travelling Musicians of Bremen, and they are immortal. The ass still brayed, the dog

still barked, the cat still mewed, and the cock still crowed, even if it was "Heil Hitler" they must chorus today. There they stood in the Senate Chamber, perched on one another's shoulders, looking through the window just as we first saw them in the pages of Grimm. That Chamber was, therefore, a place to enter on tiptoe and alone. For it is not often that you can recapture a thrill felt at four and meet face to face the idols of childhood.

I looked up, at the cathedral, its green spires like ancient patinated spear-heads thrust through the grey skies; a glint of sunshine struck the boss of Roland's shield. "Freedom do I proclaim to you, which Charlemagne and many a prince have given to this city. Be thankful to God for it, I counsel you" said Knight Roland. And today, was there freedom under the new ruler of Charlemagne's dominions? I would like to have asked one of those boys, a thoughtful-faced one that I saw in the Ratskeller. But at that moment I heard music—was it those Travelling Musicians again—and not all the drive of commerce that pushed up the Weser through the maze of docks in the Freihavn, and was hustled into the great Bank of Bremen, could change the Bremen of fables, of Alice-and-Wonderful-Animals.

In going from Bremen to Hamburg you cross the Lüneburg Heath, the old trade route of the cloth merchants. This way came Irish traders six hundred years ago with hides, leather, and stuffs, and there is among the Hanse records of 1353 a reference to these "Yresche". Even in those days Hamburg was a busy shipping port, vessels from Galway being among those which brought wool cargoes up the Elbe. One of the finest sights in Europe in the summer of 1937 was Hamburg harbour at night. I stood on the

Landungsbrücke in Altona and looked down on the Elbe where a thousand lights shone from the ships of the Hamburg-Süd, the Hamburg-Levant, the German-East Africa lines, and from the shipyards where they built the *New York*, then the largest of the Hamburg-Amerika vessels. There were ships that had sailed from Hamburg to Boulogne and thence to Lisbon, returning with wines from the Douro, and ships that had traded up the lower waters of the River Plate; lights flashed from the vessels of the Hansa lines, glowed from port-holes of a Hamburg-Amerika liner, twinkled from ships that had sailed from saga lands, the *Vulkan*, *Fulda*, *Kong Ring* and *Kong Halfdan*. Now a beam shot from the British cruising vessel *Strathnaver*, a green light swung from the four-masted *Padua*, and a flash darted from the *Monte Rosa*; the *Paulo*, which had come in this day laden with fruits and spices from southern seas, swept a beam across the decks of the *Selby* with a coal cargo from Hull, and the *Livorno* and *Asturias* glimmered faintly up the river. How many of these ships survived sea warfare after 1939?

Back of the quays lay the old quarter in the St. Pauli district, the Gängeviertel, where the streets were only two yards wide in some places. It was in these bottleneck alleys of the slums that workers in 1933 had fought with and been captured by Nazis, and nine of them were executed in public. Even after the advent of National Socialism, tourist agencies had brought people to look at those wretched homes, and hordes of sightseers gaped through doorways and windows, poverty made peepshow. I wondered how London Suburbia would have taken it if the slums had invaded their quarters one night and stared through the windows of their respectability. "If you don't go away, I'll send for the police!" But those days

were soon to pass. The war commencing 1939 brought such social changes that the Europe of the future would no longer be the Old World.

Wealthy travellers could not buy in the Alster Pavilion nor in the famous Alsterlust where pleasure-seekers from most countries had at some time paid for costly fare, the real enjoyment that a few marks could give the simple fellow in the Reeperbahn, the sailors' quarter. Here you could ride in the Hippodrome where the show riding was done by girls, to the noise of cracking whips, muffled thudding of hooves on sand, and knocking on ring-boards, and where the horses would accept a tankard of beer from you. In the Prater you were no longer in North Germany but in Bavaria. On the walls a panorama of Alpine life took you up into the farms of Mittenwald, up the valleys of Bayrischzell, and on the crags, hunting with the Bavarian Jäger. From the balcony of a farm in the Wetterstein valley Paul Seitz and his band were playing "Die Tyroler sind lustig, die Tyroler sind froh". Just for the time one could forget all those repressed-looking people in the streets outside, so taken up with the grim business of living, of one mould in the idea derived from Nazi philosophy that the approach to life was one of danger, but in their own appearance suggesting nothing of the confidence of the Nietzschean, of the self-resolve of the man who counselled "live dangerously".

Two English cruising vessels had let loose their sightseers in the city. Some of the men had followed a custom fairly general among Englishmen, that of undressing for a holiday, without which many English people would not feel on holiday. (Man dear, these eccentric English.) I knew their fate. They would be taken to the Hagenbeck Tier-park, the world's

largest Zoo, where they would see the bored-looking lion open at his trainer's bidding his aged jaws. They would see life-sized carvings of extinct animals, the flug-saurians, and the aimlessly evolved iguanadon. The next day they would be taken down the icy Elbe tunnel that connected Altona with the dock-yards, where they would listen without interest to the guide telling of its depth in meters, the number of bicycles that passed through in a year, how many season tickets were issued per month, and the cost of the tunnel itself in Reichsmarks. For the German, more given to the study of psychology than anyone else, probably knows less about it than most other people do. He cannot understand that statistics of interest to himself and the American are often extremely boring to that other member of the Anglo-Saxon race, the Englishman.

I went down to the great docks of Hamburg, to look at the Elbe for the last time, knowing that when war came all Altona would be ablaze. As if in echo to my thoughts, a roaring bomber cracked across the sky.

When you go by train from Hamburg to Lübeck you leave the Elbe for the Trave, the river that flows through country once the home of the Polab Slavs, a dreary waste of marsh and sand till Lübeck Bay is reached at Travemünde. Lübeck, once the queen of Hanse cities and head of the Hanseatic League, still showed much of her early splendour, though not all her "seven golden towers" remained today. The Holstentor was the gate through which all travellers for northern Europe entered "the Free and Hanse town of Lübeck". But before ever I came to the Holstentor, thoughts were turned to Ireland. In a kiosk outside the station my eye had caught sight of

the tricolour. It was on the cover of Eugen Lennhoff's book, *De Valera*, published in Lübeck. The author was the famous editor of *Der Telegraph*, the leading anti-Nazi daily in Vienna. His own story in 1938 was as full of bewildering incidents as Mr. de Valera's in 1916. Herr Lennhoff sat in his office in Vienna in the last hours of Austria's life as an independent State, listening to one contradictory phone call after another from his correspondents. He waited on till the last, and then, just as Nazis entered the front door of his office, he left by the back. Calling a taxi he said "Bratislava", naming the Czech frontier town. The hysterical crowds, yelling the *Horst Wessel* anthem, little knew that in that taxi against which they were pressed in the crush, sat one of Vienna's leading anti-Nazis. On to the frontier, in a stream of cars bearing frantic refugees, in the direction of Czecho-Slovakia. Too late. The frontier was closed. Eugen Lennhoff's subsequent escape into Hungary which he described in *The Last Five Hours of Austria*, was no less adventure-crowded than the escape of Eamon de Valera from Lincoln Gaol to Manchester, about which Herr Lennhoff has written in his biography of the Irish leader.

Lübeck from the top of the Petrikerche repaid ascent even by people who are too lazy generally to climb towers. At your feet lay a town of Renaissance gables, crooked streets, gleaming spires. The roof of the mighty Marienkerche shone like fish-scales. The bulgy old buildings of the salt-houses which had to be propped up from falling into the River Trave, made brown-brick background to the silver green of willows. A red-brown city, shaped like a tortoise, an island rimmed with shining silver rivers.

I looked across to the mouth of the Trave. Irish history was made out there. Roger Casement,

working in Germany for a rising in Ireland in 1916, had asked for arms and ammunition to be sent to Ireland. And so the *Aud* (she was then called the *Libau*) was busy off Traßemünde taking guns aboard for the Irish Rising, and no more exciting story of smuggled cargo has ever been told than this. A secret hold was made with a hidden entrance through a sofa bunk. Into this "conjurer's box" as the crew called it, all the German uniforms, nautical instruments, books, and the flags of other nations to be used if necessary, all the incendiary bombs and explosives, all the transformation properties which were to be used on that adventurous voyage were stored away. Challenged by the British sloop *Bluebell* after the *Aud* had waited in vain for the signal from the Irish shore that was to have told her of the readiness of Irish volunteers to receive the contraband cargo, the *Aud*, rather than submit to the British man-of-war, blew herself up off the south-west of Ireland on that fateful Good Friday of 1916.

By the last of the city gates in Lübeck stood a fine monument to Karl Hans Lody, most famous of all German spies in the war of 1914-1918. And yet his amateurish methods, his carelessness in preserving notes, were his undoing. He had been transmitting news of London defences to Berlin via Stockholm, but the British Secret Service intercepted and interpreted these. Lody had crossed from Liverpool to Dublin on an American passport, and on October 14th, 1914, he appeared at the Great Southern Hotel, Killarney, signing the register as Chas. A. Inglis, New York. That evening a detective came in and arrested him as a suspected spy. At his three-day trial at the Middlesex Guildhall, Lody, a simple honest-minded man, had confessed to everything. He told how he



had become a Reserve Lieutenant, of the Imperial German Navy and had been asked to do espionage work. "I admit I felt very uneasy. I felt I was not a fit man for a job of that kind. . . . I have never been a coward in my life, and I have never been a shirker." On the eve of his execution in the Tower, he wrote to his relatives : "Tomorrow I shall be shot here in the Tower. It is a consolation to me that I am not treated as a spy. I have had just judges, and I shall die as an officer".<sup>1</sup>

Many Lody legends grew up, one being that when taken into the courtyard of the Tower to be shot, he turned to the officer and said : "I suppose you could not shake hands with a spy !" and the reply was, "No, but I will shake hands with a brave man."

Standing in Lübeck before the Lody memorial in that year of 1937, it was strange to remember, when the Nazi emblem flew from all the buildings round, that Lody, when he had sent his messages to Germany in 1914, had signed them 'NAZI'. And that was long before any Nazi Party had been formed.

I left Lübeck for Kiel which I had last seen two years earlier, when the harbour was a splendid sight with the sun flashing on the steel turrets and white decks of the *Graf Spee*, the *Deutschland*, and the *Admiral Scheer*. The *Graf Spee* was a proud ship then, knowing nothing of her ignominious end, when she scuttled herself off Monte Video after the Battle of the River Plate with three British light cruisers. Both the *Deutschland* and the *Admiral Scheer* had played a prominent part in the Spanish Civil War. When the *Deutschland* was bombed by two Spanish Government aeroplanes in the roadstead of Ibiza, and lost twenty-

<sup>1</sup> Certain of these facts are taken from an article on Karl Lody by George Godwin, in *Reynolds News*, April 14th, 1940.

three of her crew, the *Admiral Scheer* in revenge for this had carried out one of the most ferocious bombardments in naval history. With four destroyers she swept down upon the port of Almeria, and poured 200 shells into the heart of the town, with frightful casualties not only to the native population but to the refugees who had swarmed into the city after their flight from Málaga. The bombardment of Almeria was one of the highest tension points in European affairs in 1937. Once again these two ships were to disturb a troubled Europe. On March 22nd, 1939, the *Deutschland*, accompanied by the *Admiral Scheer*, had carried Herr Hitler to Memel where the Reich incorporated that port, hitherto an autonomous territory under Lithuanian sovereignty. To an ultimatum of Memel intact or Kaunas bombed, the Lithuanian Government had deemed it expedient to surrender Memel-land. The *Admiral Scheer* played her part in the naval warfare between Germany and England in the spring of 1940, when she was attacked by the British submarine *Spearfish*.

It was a strange reflection, that this battle fleet at Kiel was massed at a place that was the cradle of the English race. Here from the Schleswig home of the Angles came that Teuton tribe which crossed in their boats to the shores of Britain, and here today were descendants of that tribe, assembling their ships at their early homeland to menace once more the coasts of Britain.

## CHAPTER IV

### AN INTERLUDE

IN the space of one year a curious change was to take place in the mentality of the adult English public, and it was brought about by the German invasion of Prague in March 1939. Although the force of public opinion had always been greater in England than in any other country, the adult English, unlike Latins or Irish people, had not been politically minded. Youth however, had changed in England before 1939. It had become serious, it was self-questioning, critical, and its political outlook was progressive. Two streams of thought were running concurrently in Europe in those years, one was international in direction, the other intensely national. In England youth had become world-minded before 1939. I well remember that lovely spring evening in March 1938 when I walked across the Green Park and bought a paper telling of the impending Nazi invasion of Austria. There was no rush then on the part of the adults to buy papers as there would have been abroad. The shock-resistance of the British was remarkable; who but they could have survived within two years the abdication of their then most popular king, and the loss of their most popular Foreign Minister, not to mention their loss of face after the Munich Agreement?

It was with grim amusement that I next read in the *Sunday Times* this paragraph on Germany's annexation

of Austria : " It is the first time since the Great War that an historic European nation has been wiped off the map in this way ". Yet it was two years after the Armistice of 1918, that by the Treaty of Versailles the Allies dismembered Austria. To Italy they gave a part, and by the Treaty of Trianon they carved up Hungary, and in March 1939, what was left of Austria had become a province of Greater Germany. As a political entity Austria had ceased to exist after 1920.

In October 1925 by the Locarno Agreement, Germany had bound herself not to seek any readjustment of her eastern frontiers by force. And on March 13, 1934, Hitler had said " The German Government had never questioned the validity of the Treaty of Locarno ". But as Hitler had also written in *Mein Kampf* that he regarded as a very sound principle the statement that " a definite factor in getting a lie believed is the size of the lie ", it was not surprising that, on March 7, 1936, he denounced Locarno and sent his troops into the demilitarised Rhineland.

On July 11, 1936, Hitler had made a Pact with Austria guaranteeing her independence. On March 11, 1938, his German troops entered Austria, and over Vienna high-powered bombers roared all day. Hitler declared the annulment of Article 88 of the Treaty of St. Germain, which had been guaranteed at Locarno. Another treaty had been torn up. " Perhaps the peace will not be disturbed. But it will be a Pax Germanica—the crushing of Right by Might. March 11th will rank as one of the saddest days in contemporary history " said the *Tribune de Lausanne*. The law of the jungle would prevail from now on. That night long pale fingers traced a message in the London

skies. Searchlights kept a watch over the greatest and geographically the most vulnerable city in the world.

On the night of the invasion of Salzburg by German troops, I was dining with a friend in a west-end restaurant. We were both gloomy-mooded. Suddenly, with British tact and every consideration for any Austrian diners, the orchestra in careless spirit began to play *The Blue Danube*. Memories of Vienna, of friends there, roused primitive feelings, I wanted to send the crockery crashing through the band. Later that night my friend and I turned in to a café in Oxford Street. A medley of musicians were playing Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody, one of their number with a concertina. It was followed by a sentimental song and then a blare of jazz. A mood of cold anger came on me. "This civilisation—is it worth saving? This jazz-racketing society, these mechanical morons, this poppycock people ——?" I savagely asked my friend.

I was never more wrong. No people were to stand their test when it came, better than the English; the decent, kindly, patient people, who endured so uncomplainingly all the sufferings of scientific slaughter, and in that conflict showed a civic spirit utterly unlike anything before. From a near-pacifist people they became a citizen army breaking with all tradition, drilling in the streets, co-operating with one another in a way which showed that, for all its persistent presence in peace time, the roots of English snobbery snap at the approach of a common peril, and a flowering of democracy spreads over the whole land of England. But 1938 had not forecast the spirit of 1939, still less of 1941, and so, feeling at odds with the unthinking sections of society, I set out for Sweden, at that time the sanest country in Europe.

Two days before I left, my Hungarian friend Tinka Hérányi, invited me to a place in Sussex which I will call Burchendon-by-the-Beach. Nowhere else but in England could such a place have existed. And the memory of this interlude was to some extent to offset in the next few weeks, the sobriety of the Swedish holiday. Tinka had a caravan in Burchendon which she called "Wheels". She said she had to turn these round once a year, to comply with some ancient bye-law, and as her van was not under power, I hoped it was not for that reason I had been asked to visit the caravan. Hers was one of a little colony, but as she never spoke to any of the other colonists I never discovered why she had hitched her wagon to the Burchendon community. One of the colonists claimed to be in communication with the Unseen. Her daylight trances which took place in her garden plot, were alarming to newcomers. "It's a nice place you've brought me to, you, the tinker's last hope", I said to my friend. "Look at that." "What?" asked Tinka who was smouldering a sausage on the cooking stove. "Well I've seen enough just now to raise hair on a bald man—I've seen what the Book of the Mormons missed out in its Tablets of Gold, and what I've seen I'm keeping to myself."

After supper we brought out our flutey pipes and commenced to play on the steps of the caravan. The medium withdrew to a more meditative quarter of the colony where people were living the same simple life as ourselves, some in railway carriages, some in pantehnicons, and those who were taking sun-cures lived in glass-houses. Several of the colonists were strengthening their boundary lines against each other, one widening and deepening his ditch, while one family

seemed intent on fortifying themselves from possible attack by building a dry wall. Half the family stood in a line and passed the bricks on to Dad, and the other children handed them to Mum farther down. When the parents met in the middle the work would be finished. It seemed strange I thought, that people who came together for the purpose of forming communities should feel it necessary to fortify themselves against each other, but on the other hand that dog of Tinka's did look a bit queer. Though Tinka neither raised walls nor dug ditches against her neighbours, she also might have found it necessary to protect herself, and had probably taken on that vicious little Flossie for that reason.

But there was a more sinister purpose about the determined digging of one man at the far end of the colony. For an outlay of £2 15s. 6d. he was, with some home-made cement, turning his little garden into a bomb-proof shelter. And its entrance was cunningly concealed with pots of geraniums. At the first shrill wail of warning, Mr. Mugworthy would with atavistic instinct revert to troglodyte times. He might of course be digging his own grave, the flowers at the head rather suggested that.

Mr. Mugworthy was a model citizen, as every Burchendon person knew. His scrap-iron, neatly stacked, was so divers in its composition as to suggest that he must have been keeping for years rusty kettles, horse-shoes, leaking buckets and peeling pots, simply to help his country through its next war. When the Government asked for the voluntary sacrifice of lawnmowers, Mr. Mugworthy would assuredly offer himself to his neighbour as a human substitute, so that his neighbour might give up his machine. With his legs held, in wheelbarrow fashion, Mr. Mugworthy

would be ready on his hands to pass up and down his neighbour's plot, plucking at the grass with his teeth. "A little slower please, I have met with a dandelion root" would be the only murmur made by this heroic citizen in his arduous task. The grass would be his sole reward, and this he would undoubtedly conserve for a grateful Government who might one day tell its people to go and eat grass.

Tinka and I enjoyed playing our pipes. It was nice to let ourselves go, to pursue art untrammelled, to play "The Walls of Limerick" as it should be played. I didn't like to tell Tinka so, but I suspected her of missing out that difficult little bit where you had to invent a top 'G' owing to the limited number of blow-holes on your pipe. Of the Millennium Makers who had gathered in their gardens that evening, all had retired to their shelters, all but two; one was a lady in all-white and a supshade, who was still sitting in her deck-chair at half-past eleven. "Does she never feed?" I asked. "I don't *know*" said Tinka, "they say . . . but I prefer to think it is aspirins myself."

The second figure was one of the diggers. But that hardly conveys the meaning here. Gertrude Guestaway was tunnelling, trenching, boring and burrowing, flinging up now sods, now soil showers, she was digging as one demented. It became terrible to watch. It was rapidly reducing me to imbecility, and it was all very well for Tinka to go on playing as though nothing was happening, it was a dance of death she was piping. Hypnotised, my gaze was riveted on Grovelling Gertie, that human mole. If she was not making a bomb refuge for the whole colony, then either a radium rush had begun and she was staking her claim to a deposit of pitch-blend



ore, or she was digging her own Channel Tunnel from Burchendon to Boulogne.

I picked up the "Walls of Limerick" where I had left off, though Tinka was a good way past that bit now, and went over again the historic siege of the city. Gradually the lights from the huts went out, one by one, and only the white figure of Aspirin Annie, reading by moonlight, and of Gertrude Guestaway could be seen now. Tinka had become rhapsodic and was playing a Hungarian air; she seemed to be far away on her native plain, and the white Aspirin figure might be the Muse herself. It was a pity that, at the sublimest point of Tinka's playing, Flossie should have chosen to jump from under the caravan steps to try and get another piece out of my leg, for I let a shriek out of my pipe that sent the figure in white flying into her hut for another aspirin; the little cur ran away snarling.

But Gertie? Gentle reader, not a tremor of a muscle was visible in the arms of that wielder of the spade. When clouds hid the moon, she was digging in the dark. It was when we were going back to Town by train that we heard a loud report near Clapham Junction.

"Gertie gets through" said Tinka.

## CHAPTER V

### A PURE PORT

A BLONDE giant sat next to me on the steamer that rocked her way over the Kattegat to Gothenburg this August of 1938. With frigid calm he and his fellow Swedes were reading their own sober papers on the day when a German Nazi paper was storming against some "injustice" suffered by Germans in Denmark. Not a Swede stirred in his seat. But Sweden had grave problems herself; there was Russia, there was Finland, there was Germany, and there was the fact that Sweden was a member of that Northern Bloc represented by the Social Democrats as "the light from the North"; that light which, according to Tolstoi, would one day save the world from darkness and destruction. And yet in 1940 both Norway and Sweden opposed the article of the League of Nations which referred to free passage being granted to troops going to the help of another State. So that when Russia attacked Finland, the Northern Lights were dimmed for the land of the Suomi.

"Times have changed," said my Swedish deck companion. "In Ireland you have got your ports back and you are, at least outwardly, on friendly terms with England. But do you remember how in 1916, the *Aud* sailed up this Kattegat with arms for a rebellion in Ireland? She could not put in to one of your own harbours then because they were under British

control." This question of the control of Irish ports was, long before the 1938 Anglo-Irish Agreements, of more interest to people abroad than was generally realised in Ireland. When I was in Stockholm in 1936 I had had an interview with an Editor of the *Dagens Nyheter*, one of the two chief Swedish daily papers, and when we came to discuss Ireland the first question the Editor asked me was : "Do you think it will be long before the British give up their control of your harbours?"

"They will do so before the next world war, and when it comes, will ask for them back" I had said.

My Swedish deck friend was called away, and I went aft to look at Frederikshavn which we were leaving for Gothenburg. The wind slewed round the quay, straight off the grey choppy water, where the short truculent waves slapped the sides of fishing boats, rocking them to a broken rhythm. Gulls wheeled round the *Nordsee*, the *Henrik Gersen* and the *Vigen*. To the north of Grenen the Skager seas swung in strife, the tides of the Skager Rak fighting their age-old battle. Away round the Skaw, that bleak land-thrust jutting out between the two seas as though trying to part the combatants, live the hardy fishermen in whom the Viking spirit still shows itself. Many an Irishman going there must have pictured on those stormy waters the Viking ships with raven banners, and the tall strong-limbed *Dubh Ghaill*<sup>1</sup> in their winged helmets pulling with mighty oars their beaked war-boats out of this northern haven, on their way to, ravage the coasts of Leinster. "Land-Leapers, merciless, soure hardie", says the old chronicler of those Vikings.

<sup>1</sup> "Dark Strangers", Danes.

On the five hours' passage across the Kattegat from Frederikshavn, I saw ships sailing from Copenhagen to Oslo, the Faroø Islands, local steamers on their way to Laeslō Island, oyster boats coming up from the Lim Fjorden, and Swedish vessels bringing cargo to the Danish harbours of Frederikshavn, Aalborg and Hobro. Then came the Skagaro Archipelago, hump-backed limestone islands at the mouth of the Gotalv. We threaded our way in and out of this maze till at last the Navigation School, the Skansen Tower and the Masthuggs Church rose in sight, and the long red-rocked city of Gothenburg stretched before us to starboard. The ship steered slowly past the cable-station, the harbour bar called the Palvirket, and moored at the Skeppsbron Quay in the cleanest docks in the world.

I went down to the docks that night. The Götaverken Quay was floodlighting the Fjord steamer from Norway, gold-bright ripples flecked the steel-cold, silver-black water, like a swift stream of flame running over molten metal. Sirens boomed across the harbour, but the quays were silent save for the creaking of the fishing boats as the water rocked them, and the chough-choughing of the last little steamer that was fussily puffing her way to one of the islands. But in the morning there was no busier place in Scandinavia. Among the maze of shipping were men at work loading pulp, discharging pipes; the coal-tug *Farjon* was chug-chugging while her crew, stripped to the waist, perspiring, their bronzed backs oily with sweat, gleamed in the strong sunlight, muscles quivering, arms flashing, as the workers coaled up the *Viking*. The *Albrektsund* and the *Marstrand* were calling their passengers aboard crowded decks, a continuous coming to and fro on the piers. The *Udevilla* from

Oslo, the *Tell* and the *Lilly Gullholmen* loading up their holds; tubs of salted fish were landed from the *Egon* and the *Runa*, and the *Pothnia* was discharging jute from Dundee. And again one was to ask after 1940 how many of these good ships were still sailing the seas. Siemens Schückhardt's shed brought my mind round to the Shannon; now the workers were straining at ropes round castings; the rattle of the *kraner*, mammoth cranes, brought men on to the track lines, and up swung another sheet of moulding. Down along the Stigsbergskajen, the Swedish-American Lloyd Dock, the *Gripsholm* rose, a high wall of whiteness above quays and sheds, the latest luxury liner. On her buff funnels were the three crowns of Sweden, blue and gold. Above them, midget men with shining pails, washing the paint round the huge elliptical craters. Men above the crowns.

On the Masthuggskajen a bell warned of the coming of the great *kran*. Slowly it moved into position, and like some death-dealing insect with antennæ and eyes outstanding from the head, magnified a thousand times, the crane with its car and side windows, turned its long neck to the left, slowly sent out a feeler, and the hook descended for its prey. Swaying slightly this hook was caught by human hands below. Then the carriage of a Chrysler was swung vertically to the ship's side. A crimson-bodied car with all its complicated mechanism exposed, a mass of tubes and rib-like sections, a human corpse dissected.

From the quays I went to the Tradgardsforeningen, which was the most beautiful park in Europe, where trees swept like peacocks the velvet turf. In the clear water of the lakes the flowers reflected themselves, dahlias scarlet, hollyhocks rose-pink and lemon-yellow, gaillardias orange, Jack o'lanterns a-flame,

delphiniums sky-blue, and when a breeze set the calm surface of the water in motion, a ripple of colours trembled over the mirrored picture. The *Slottskogen* was the popular park where you might picnic in that decorous fashion of the Swedes. But in the Tradgardsforeningen you must take such pleasures more sedately still, at the handsomely designed restaurant. How different this building from the flashy brilliance of Hamburg's Alsterlust, from the friendly gaiety of Copenhagen's Tivoli. Here the Swedish love of colour showed itself in those flower-beds and the roseries, in the pink valerian which shook its soft bosses over the terrace wall. Here you sampled from the *Smorgasbord* or cold table such dishes as *sill*, slices of herring in sweetened vinegar flavoured with spices and onions, and *Kottbullar* (meat balls), or *Kaldomar*, which is minced steak, veal and pork, mixed with cream and eggs, covered in white cabbage and served with sauce. And a first-rate band provided you with good music. The Englishman does *not* take his pleasures sadly, but the Swede certainly took his soberly, and his frozen exterior often prevented foreigners from finding out that most Swedes were so very well worth knowing. Swedish ceremoniousness too had often proved a barrier to closer acquaintance. Nowhere were there more pitfalls for the untaught than in polite circles in Sweden. Swedish etiquette was fearful and formidable.

I looked down for the last time on Gothenburg harbour from Skansen. Red rocks, white ships, silver petroleum tanks. The *Styrso*, the *Arlart* and the *Faring* were steaming down to the bar; the *Westkusten* and the *Danefjord* were slowly entering the Samsgardshamnen; the fishing smack *Prins Karl* was circling around the giant *Odin*, movement everywhere on the

blue sheet of water, a ceaseless passing to and fro of vessels, cranes describing semicircles, bisecting arcs, cutting segments; a bustling from point to point of miniature men, dynamic forces in opposition to the long, static line of low, old hills.

The journey from Gothenburg to Stockholm I remember for the heat of the carriage with its closed windows. Swedes were quick as Swiss to find a draught. The Swedes when they sat often insisted on shutting all windows, but when standing in the corridor they generally opened them wide. I have wanted to ask why people should feel less cold standing than sitting. On the journey to Stockholm we passed pine valleys and quiet shining lakes, and we also passed so many farmhouses of red timber that I longed for somebody to break out in bright blue. These wooden houses were almost ready made, being sent out in sections and put together by the people on the spot. By no stretch of imagination could these buildings be regarded as architecturally satisfying; they had no relation to the character of the countryside as had many of the farms in West Cork, nor were they an integral part of the landscape like the Cotswold houses round Sheepscombe and Birdlip.

At Stockholm I talked to Mr. Kurt Andersen, one of the editors of the *Social Demokraten*, and he told me a good deal about the co-operative movement, so that I was able to compare Swedish achievements with developments that had taken place in Ireland since the work of A.E. and others commenced at Plunket House. The Swedish co-operative movement had an origin as modest as that of the Irish co-operative creameries. It developed from a small association of consumers on the Rochdale pattern of the nineties. But by 1938 its influence had extended to every

department of economic life; it had broken big trusts, and its housing movement placed it first in Europe in this field. More than thirteen per cent. of all trade in Sweden was by 1938 co-operative.

"The Swedish Social Democratic Party has pledged itself to support increased armaments in view of the situation at this time," said Kurt Andersen. "The Social Democratic Party at last realises that it has a country worth defending," commented the editor of a Swedish liberal paper when I told him of my talk with Kurt Andersen. And I thought of the gigantic Nobel armaments works in Varmland, bearing the same name as the peace prize!

"Sweden, though she has attached herself to the sterling bloc, and her chief economic interests lie with England, has considerable interests in German armaments", Mr. Wretling of the communist daily, *Ny Dag*, had told me. "The Grangesberg Koncern, the leading Swedish iron firm, sends iron ore to Germany and brings back steel. Germany wants Swedish copper, but still more would she like our iron ore deposits." This visit to *Ny Dag* was sharply recalled in February 1940, when police raided these offices. The Communists were then accused of constituting an espionage organisation for Moscow during the Russo-Finnish War.

After some experience of housing conditions in slum quarters in London, Dublin, and Warsaw, it was a pleasure to travel in Sweden, then the most civilised country in Europe, and a country in which the education of the workers was reflected to advantage in their way of life. I made friends with a worker in a food store in Stockholm, and in visiting him and his friends saw how in the poorer homes a natural love of form revealed itself. The Swedes had a pleasing way



of arranging colours and also flowers, their homes were free of gew-gaws and did not reveal on the part of the owners that indiscriminate buying which made so many English homes look like a jumble shop. A Swedish home, like a Dutch one, was a work of art. And in the matter of bodily pride the Swedes perhaps came first in Europe, you could never take a Swedish woman by surprise, she was always tidy.

Violet Connolly, a fellowcountrywoman whose travel writings are widely known, was in Sweden at the same time as myself, and in an article in *Studies* said : " Good housing and all that is bound up with it impressed me so strongly in Sweden that I had eyes for little else during my short visit." A good many travellers felt the same, especially when they visited the flats of co-operative workers outside Stockholm. At the time I was in the city there was indignation because a member of a Marxist party from England had said she had found slums in Stockholm. Instead of ingratiating herself with the workers, she did the opposite. " Show me a slum " said an indignant worker.

Few other capitals even by 1941 could show in their architecture, rational classicism developed to the same extent as Stockholm could. Functionalism had evolved with results more pleasing than anywhere else in Europe. The younger architects in Sweden regarded themselves as scientific co-operators in the working-out of social problems rather than as artists expressing individual ideas. The State was guide and co-operator rather than controller ; for instance, while it subsidised cheap housing it encouraged the individual to build the house himself. The Co-operative Union had the largest architects' office in Scandinavia, and here all the plans were made for the Union. I went

by steamer to see the workers' dwellings on an island outside the city. These, built in terraces, were much in advance of any, at that time on the continent.

Mr. Childs in his book *Sweden, The Middle Way*,<sup>1</sup> has rightly said that the success of the Swedes is due to a combination of plain commonsense with a passion for making the most of everyday affairs. "In a sense they are the ultimate pragmatists, interested only in the workability of the social order. This may explain why their contribution to political and social thought has been slight." A very alien form of social thought was engaging the attention of Swedes when I was in Stockholm. Swedish firms were being told by German Nazis that if they wished to trade with Germany they must testify to the Aryan blood of their shareholders. The answer sent by the Swedish official to the effect that submission is not the correct reply to impudence, did not serve as a model for later relations with Germany. The Nordic racial doctrines of Nazism were making little headway in Stockholm in 1938. I saw three Nazis addressing an open-air meeting, and they did not succeed in collecting more than eleven people. It was not surprising; the speeches scarcely merited challenge. There were better things to do than to listen to such nonsensical talk as Race Purity. There was the sea and its thousand islands.

So I made a trip through the Swedish archipelago to Drottningholm, the birthplace of the King of Sweden, and explored Stockholm's waterways, sailing past tall buildings, tall trees, tall people. In a few hours we passed under thirty bridges, and then we came to the Djurgårdsbrunnns Canal, its banks shaded by birch, walnut, and lime trees, its margin brown

<sup>1</sup> Faber and Faber, 1936.

with bulrush heads. Then out into open water, and past the *Upland, Tessin, Gunhild*, steamers on their way to the Nybörkaja in Stockholm. Many workers had their own boats, and my friend from the store took me for a sail to Vaxholm, where a white sail swiftly passed across the grey bulk of Vaxholm fort, as light breaking over shadow.

Beyond Vaxholm a Limerick man made history in 1731. He was Peter, Count de Lacy, Field-Marshal of Russia, who attacked the Swedish coast and brought to anchor one hundred and thirty ships and landed his army a few miles from Stockholm. This brought the Swedes to sign the Treaty of Nystadt, by which Karelia, Esthonia, Latvia, and some of the Baltic islands were ceded to Russia. In this way an Irishman, who was one of the greatest generals in history, had some influence on the most important event of modern times, the Russian Revolution, for it was the Lettish soldiers who after a long period of oppression under Russian autocracy became the vanguard of the Revolution in 1917.

In the Publicists Klubben, the Press Club of Stockholm, pressmen were discussing the intricate question of Swedish-Russian relations in the summer of 1938. "There's the *Ny Dag*" said a tall man to a colleague, "suggesting we should make a pact of mutual assistance with Russia! Why, have they forgotten Russia's Baltic guarantee only a few months ago? That was a nice Russian runaway. If you remember, Russia had promised to help Lithuania if Poland should intimidate Lithuania. So when Poland mobilised her troops on the Lithuanian frontier and sent Kaunas an ultimatum, Lithuania sent an S.O.S. to Russia. Not only did Russia turn down the appeal, but she said, please keep quiet, or you may get others into trouble.

And it won't be long before she takes over Lithuania, Latvia and Esthonia herself." <sup>1</sup>

"Well, Russia is suffering from xenophobia," said a short dark man to his tall neighbour, "and there's reason for this, with so many external enemies ready to sabotage her system. All the work she has built up throughout her great empire, all the struggles of her workers, have to be guarded against potential wreckers."

"You're on the wrong paper, my friend" said the tall man, with a slow smile. "Better apply to *Ny Dag*. Communism may come in Sweden as anywhere else, but on the whole we shall make pretty bad communists."

I didn't debate that; hadn't I seen workers' flats in Stockholm built in such a way that one family couldn't see directly into the windows of another family? One need not have been long in the country to find out that Swedes were as individualistic as Spaniards; and that a Swede's attachment to liberty was as great as an Englishman's. Swedish agronomy showed something of this individualism as late as 1938, for as in Denmark, every farm "sits by itself in its own green fields" as Karel Capek observed.

From the Publicists' Club I went to Artillerigatan, wondering how many Irish visitors to Stockholm knew that No. 28B on this hilly street had a link with Eamon De Valera. It was here that the Irish-American, St. John Gaffney, formerly Consul-General in Munich, opened a bureau of "The Friends of Irish Freedom" in 1917, to make known Ireland's cause at the Peace Conference in Paris. From here he sent to, the

<sup>1</sup> On July 21st, 1940, these three Baltic countries became Soviet States, and early in August were incorporated into U.S.S.R.

Ministers of the seventeen Powers accredited to the Swedish Government a Memorandum dated December 23rd, 1918, part of whose text was as follows :

“The Irish nation has exactly the same right at the Peace Conference and to lay before the latter its just claim to national self-determination, as have the Czechs, the Jugo-Slavs, the Poles, the Finns, or any other nation. We feel convinced that no man possessing the sense of logic and justice will refuse Ireland's claim to be admitted to the Conference of Nations. We are equally convinced that all those nations whose liberation has been secured as a result of the war, and for whom Ireland entertains feelings of sincere sympathy and friendship, will recognise Ireland's right to the same treatment as themselves.” Extracts from this Memorandum were published by the British Government in a document relating to the Sinn Féin movement. This document states that a copy of the Memorandum was found in De Valera's attaché case when he was arrested on May 17, 1918.

Gaffney stated that during his work in Stockholm, President Wilson had tried to stop his activities and to get his passport cancelled. But when Gaffney was called to the principal police department of Stockholm, the chief said : “If the German Government recognises your passport, that is sufficient for us . . . we Swedes have sympathy with all oppressed nations and are glad to be informed on Ireland's struggle for liberty.”

Beyond Artillerigatan, out on the water, I saw that fine ship, the *Arandora Star*, favourite among Britain's pleasure cruisers. There she lay, white as an ice-floe, the holiday home of hundreds of happy people. It was irony that this pleasure vessel should have met exactly two years later, such a tragically unfitting end.

Then, on July 3rd, 1940, when she was taking German and Italian interpees from Britain to Canada, the *Arandora Star* was torpedoed and sunk by a German submarine. As soon as the explosion occurred there was little evidence among the internees, of the German-Italian alliance which then existed. The Germans and Italians fought each other for the lifeboats, and British soldiers guarding them said later, "We cursed the U-Boat, but not so much as did the Germans and Italians on board, who were fierce in their denunciation of this type of warfare." And so the Leyland liner, with her captain standing on her bridge, went down to her grave in the Atlantic.

In a year when a volcanic Europe awaited its own eruption, when so much of established order and of tradition would be engulfed in the cataclysm, a national museum, as the repository of the gathered heritage of ages, was not to be missed on one's travels. In the Nordiska Museum, Stockholm, you could see not only the Scandinavian cultures, but those of Finland, Lapland and the Baltic States. There were the harpoon heads of the Esthonians, their stout butter firkins of wood. There was the model of a Lapp with his wife in a reindeer sledge, carrying their baby in a birch-bark cradle. The smallest people in Europe found with the tallest; it was strange after seeing models of six-foot Swedes to look at the little Lapps from the same villages. And there was so much to learn from them, old and wise in the quietude of their tundra lands, that I thought of catching the Lapland Express from Stockholm that night. But I realised that if I went it would be as a tourist, or at best an escapist, for to make a long stay in Lapland was out of the question for anyone temperamentally unsuited to the Great White North.

I walked along the Strandvägen and looked at the timber boats, the *Ida Frötuna*, *Linneæ Blidö*, *Alma Lanna*, *Saltvik*, and *Aaland*. There were others from Finland which had brought timber from the northern forests, and the wood was stacked trim to the boat's edge. When the boats sailed, the masts themselves were moving trees. Tonight in the growing darkness the fishing vessels were not good to look at. Their shrouds became crucified men, rows of them stretched on high. Their cross-masts were guns. It was August 1938. A pile of timber planks lay along the quay. I stepped over, buried my nose in it, and drank up draughts of pine forests. The water was like the colours of a pigeon's breast, the city lights shone through the lindens. A sailor climbed up a ship's side. He had a long beautiful body. A sheen of rippled gold crossed the water and a huge lemon moon hung over the Skeppsbron. The *Saltsjön*, *Trasten-Waddö* and *Blidösund* showed lights at their mastheads. On the long Baltic summer night, darkness had at last descended.

Wandering round the quays I thought of the Swede I had seen in a railway carriage once on the way to Marseilles. A really attractive cocotte had done all she could to get that self-contained traveller interested in her, but all in vain. She could cut no Swedish ice. "There is no continental naughtiness in Sweden" said Douglas Goldring. He was right; you could not even find any round the Nybrokaja. Stockholm was a pure port.

I left it for a city rich in legends of the Viking days, for the word Uppsala itself means 'high halls', the great feasting halls built of wood making this place the centre of the Odin cult. Uppsala was one of the most peaceful places on earth when I saw it in 1938.

And there was nothing in its tall graceful elms and its aristocratic grass, long, soft, feather-tapering, to show these rose from the sacred groves, the worshipping ground of the Asir. From the ancestors of those trees hung human sacrifices offered to Thor as the protector against disease and drought. The victims' blood was caught in the bowls below and sprinkled on the altar, the flesh cooked in cauldrons in the vast wooden gilded temple on the plain, and eaten by the worshippers of Odin and Freya whose huge images rose within the building. But now the largest Christian temple in Sweden rises from the hill of Uppsala, and in this cathedral you could see the tomb of the murdered St. Eric (ancestor of one of Britain's Foreign Ministers, Mr. Anthony Eden), and the tombs of Swedenborg, Gustavus Vasa, and Linnæus, whose name is perpetuated in the botanical gardens of Uppsala.

In the quiet country round Lake Siljan I spent my last days in Sweden, visiting peasant homesteads, idly plucking the bright flowers of Dalarna and improving my Swedish with the herdsmen who brought the red-polled cattle through the fields. The church at Dalarna which gleamed white through the pale green birches was a puzzle. From its exterior which was in the Russian style, one would have expected an Orthodox liturgy which, in a village of Lutheran peasants would have been a surprise in itself. But the service was Lutheran with many features of the Catholic liturgy, the priest was vested, candles were on the altar, and the service was called High Mass. It commenced with the Introit, and included the Kyrie Eleison, the Sursum Corda, and Gloria in Excelsis. And the Lutheran peasants who filled the church with the bright colours of their native costume, still invoked the saints and spoke of their clergy as priests. Con-



fession was fairly widely practised. The truth was, that those who introduced Protestantism into Sweden did so with much more moderation than in most countries.

Rättvik, the tourist centre on Lake Siljan, kept me less than a day. The over-decorated period-restaurant irritated me, it was like eating in a museum. Through the long green country of Scania I set south for Elsinore. I took the ferry from Helsingborg on the Swedish side of the Sound, and from the ramparts of Kronborg Castle, Elsinore, looked over the narrow channel which divides Sweden from Denmark. Through this Sound on May 31, 1938, as many as thirty-two German warships preceded by twenty-five fast motor boats to mark the channel, steamed up through the Little Belt which Germany prevented Denmark from mining. Excursions through Danish waters, and flights over Danish territory had become so frequent that by the summer of 1938 the Danish Government had ceased to protest. Two years before this, German ships had started to make themselves well acquainted with Danish waters as a preliminary to the intended invasion of Denmark. Near Flensburg on the frontier, a German naval port had been built, which could rival even Kiel.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The foregoing facts are taken from an article by Per Nystrom in the *Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfarts-Tidning*. They suggest that as early as 1936 there was a definite German campaign for the invasion of Denmark as part of the plan to encircle Britain. This would seem to throw doubt on the claim made by Germany that she invaded Denmark to frustrate an intended attack on the latter country by Britain and France.

## CHAPTER VI

### "THE CITY OF SMILES"

BEFORE the war-storm broke on Europe, a traveller had the interest of finding out the different ways in which people of the various capitals amused themselves. When one thought of pleasure, Paris even in 1939 came first to mind, because the French have refined pleasure to a higher degree than any other European people. Then there was Budapest, a blend of the artificial and the meretricious, with gaiety spontaneous even in the troubled times of 1939. A Hungarian will work himself up to get amused, he *must* be entertained. Left without stimuli he is often helpless, and his quick reactions bring depression after periods of joyous abandon. The true Hungarian is still a plainsman, and perhaps his temperament has been conditioned by the life on those wider plains across which his ancestors once roamed with their yurts. And then there was Dublin whose immortal wit is a greater joy than any paid-for pleasures, the talk of whose citizens cannot be bought elsewhere for the wealth of the world, that macrocosmic Dublin of *Ulysses*; *As I was going down Sackville Street*; and *Remembering Sion*, which James Joyce, Oliver St. John Gogarty, and Desmond Ryan have explored, and whose spirit they have revealed.

And now there was Copenhagen, "*Die Stadt des Lächelns*" "the city of smiles" before the German invasion. To see how Danes enjoyed themselves I

went to the Tivoli, which as a pleasure park had no rival in Europe. Where you could see buildings of oriental splendour illuminated with coloured lights, rose, green, gold ; where you could walk up avenues of fairy lights and see fountains raining pink and silver ; could take coffee in which Copenhagen excelled, under the Chinese pagoda in an exotic alcove, and watch the sky change colour, a crimson flare, a star-burst, a trail of amethyst and emerald as the rockets flew to earth. There was good music in the concert hall, there was the Danish School of Ballet, an Italian pantomime, vaudeville and operettas, a score of side-shows. And you grew dizzy looking at the man who stood among the cars on the switchback track, an unconscious acrobat, the man who could balance himself on the floor that was like a stormy sea, and leave it while it was in motion. Like a skater he cut and turned, moving among the passengers, giving an extra thrill to some small boy by sending his car spinning. And watching it all, and hearing the talk of the people, I thought that the Danes not only in appearance, but in their pleasure tastes, were first cousins to the English, or, "like the English would be if they hadn't gone wrong somewhere" as a friend said to me.

For a little time at any rate, Copenhagen with its absence of slums, its balanced, truly democratic life, was a capital from which many of the world's troubles seemed removed. But for a short time only. As an independent entity Denmark was already doomed ; Danish democracy was to become another victim of a Germanic Cæsar. But for the time being one could in Copenhagen recall AE's words : "I could not stand the highly organised machine State whether capitalist or communist ; and I would feel horribly uncomfortable

## “ THE CITY OF SMILES ”

in a Mexican world of primitive cobblers and weavers. I can't imagine any country or place quite so fitted for my failings as my own country and my own location. I don't think I would have liked the sanitary arrangement of ancient Athens, though I should have delighted in the society of Plato and Aristophanes and Socrates. I believe the smells in Chinese cities are worse, and that dispose of a yearning to have lived close to Laotze. I have read accounts of Hindu yogis and I cannot with my temperament see myself with a beggar's bowl following after Buddha. Yes, I am where I ought to be.”<sup>1</sup>

Certainly this was true in my own case as far as gastronomic tastes went ; I felt that in Copenhagen I was where I ought to be. For neither London nor Paris could offer shellfish or coffee like Copenhagen's. Who had ever been to Porta's on the Nyhavn in Copenhagen and eaten crayfish and lobster there, as even a poor traveller might do, and had not, in his dream of fair living, set those dishes on his Elysian table? Hans Andersen had taken his meals here, and looking on the tangle of brown masts from this quaint waterway, had thought of foreign lands ; it was the sight of these boats that stirred his love of travel and carried him as far as Turkey. And at No. 6 Vinegadstrade the moon shone through his attic window telling him what she had seen elsewhere, as Andersen says in his *Picture Book Without Pictures*.

The most expensive shellfish restaurants were along the Gammel Strand, but more interesting than these were the Amager fishwomen, each of whom sat with a tub of live fish and a slaughter stool beside her. Danes bought their fish alive, selecting from the

<sup>1</sup> *A Memoir of AE* (George William Russell), pp. 249-250, by John Eglinton. Macmillan, London, 1937.

*Rodes pøtter* (plaice) and *sild* (herring). The Amager mother in white apron and newspaper over her cap, stood, knife in hand, like a surgeon. 'If you didn't like the sight you could turn round the corner to the Flower Market in the Hoegbroplads, and see how the Danes displayed their flowers on a stall. Some of the latter were like small glasshouses and there was a great show of colour. The Amager island women who did such a good trade here were the descendants of the Dutch gardeners brought over by Christian I. In this flower market I talked with a Swedish sailor from the Aaland Islands. "Yes, I come from the 'Malta of the north'" he said, "and we shall be busy there soon. Our islands were neutralised in 1921, but I wouldn't like to say what will happen when a European war comes; there will be a race between Russia and Germany for the Aaland Archipelago". I was to remember his words later during the Czecho-Slovakian crisis in September 1938. At that fateful time Sweden and Finland, hitherto hostile over the question of the ownership of these three hundred Baltic islands, made common cause for their defence. Herr Sandler, Sweden's Foreign Minister, said at that time: "both the Swedish and the Finnish Governments had found themselves brutally faced with the necessity of taking prompt measures to safeguard Aaland's neutrality". Russia however, blocked the Swedish-Finnish efforts to re-fortify these islands, and after the Russo-Finnish war in 1940, Finland, under Russian pressure, removed her troops and war material from these strategic islands."

For an Irish visitor to Copenhagen there was plenty to see in the National Museum, where the cultural connections between Denmark and Ireland were shown by the "collar harnesses" from Jutland and Funen

with their Celtic details in the elaborate bronze work. Here was a bishop's staff from Ireland, and the beautiful Lisbjerg altar of the twelfth century with Irish influence on the designs in bronze. Here was a Tara pattern brooch in bronze, gold lunulae, bracelets, a sword-hilt, and a lovely little silver beaker from the royal grave-mound at Jelling, all stamped with their Irish background.

From these things in the Museum my attention was diverted by a group of schoolboys. In the wonder of a moment they stop before the skeleton of a man who lived eight thousand years before them. They crowd around that long-headed ancestor, bending over him, passing boyish jokes on his skull, peering into those cavernous eye-sockets, counting the remaining teeth. O ancient man, can you see your descendants looking on you now? With no reverence for your antiquity, with no admiration for your ability to live to three score years under hardships beyond our endurance and, haunted ever by the thought of death, beset by ghostly fears, devoting all your culture to the grave. O strange man, what thoughts within that dolicocephalic head? What unknown tongue was uttered through those gaping jaws? O man, eight thousand years wiser than we are now, who pity you the ignorance of your neolithic age, is this not a strange reflection, that the more we would learn of antiquity, the farther we must get from it? It is to the future we must look for knowledge of the past, since with the march of time we learn more and more of pre-history. There is plenty of pre-history indeed to be learnt in Denmark; there is too a wealth of fostered folk-lore. Among the German and Scandinavian peoples, shoemakers seem to have been the chief story-tellers; Hans Sachs the cobbler poet comes early to mind,

also the Danish shoemaker who told Grundtvig, founder of the Folk Schools, the traditional tales of his race ; and then Hans Andersen's father the cobbler of Odense, who told the little Hans those stories which stirred his early imagination in that humble home in the Munkemoellestraede. When you wandered along this little old street you felt you might meet any moment Tiny Tuk, or Crittley Crabbly with his microscope, and looking in the shoemaker's shop you wouldn't have been at all surprised to see there the Red Shoes that little Karen wore. No wonder Humbert Wolfe wrote :

*I had crossed over to Denmark with  
the most exalted plans  
Of writing a Danish epic—why did  
you step in Hans,  
With your hare, and your little fir-tree,  
and your dead-red sand ?*

It was hard indeed not to think of Hans anywhere in " Funen the Fertile ", the garden island where he was born, and where his shoemaker father took him as a little lad through the cool green beechwoods, and told him stories from the Arabian Nights while the small Hans played with the puppet theatre they had made for him at home.

In the Andersen Museum in the Jansenstraede I followed him from the day when, a lad of fourteen, Hans said goodbye outside the town gates to his mother and grandmother, when the coach carried him away to Copenhagen, where from singing he took to play-writing. I saw in the museum the library of Andersen's works, containing Hans Tegner's original illustrations of the fairy tales. More faithfully than

any artist here, Tegner reproduced the interiors of Danish homes, with those brown hangings that shade off into a special and strange silver lustre which the workers of the Royal Copenhagen Porcelain wares have achieved in another sphere of art. • Who has put such humour into his drawings as Professor Hans Tegner? The snail and the hare, the storks and swans, pigs and cats, the mice at supper, all behaved in that quaintly intelligent way, realistic yet fantastic as Andersen made them. There were other editions of Andersen's works glowing with the gorgeous colours of Axel Mathiesen, and a Hungarian artist had contributed a lovely picture for “ The Swineherd ” in soft pinks and blues. There were Kay Nielsen's drawings too, delicate and whimsical ; and the German broadsheets in their vivid crimsons and yellows illustrating serially the fairy-stories. Andersen's fairy tales have been translated into nearly all the languages of Europe and several oriental ones. The first time I saw a specimen of prose in a language of Greenland it was on looking through the book-shelves in this model museum. As well as in the better known tongues the fairy tales could be found here in modern Greek, Finnish, Lithuanian, Lettish, Esthonian, Czech, Japanese, Chinese, and in Esperanto.

In Odense I heard tales of Nazi espionage, and knew it would not be long before the German-Danish frontier would be a fiction. • The German Director of Propaganda for the Schleswig region was busy raising another “ German minority problem ” in one more part of Europe. Through the German-directed Kreditanstalt, land in South Jutland, Denmark, was already passing into Nazi hands, and soon the free plebiscite of 1920 which ensured for Denmark the retention of North Schleswig (South Jutland) was



to be violated. The largest underground hangar in Northern Europe had already been laid out in German Schleswig, close to the frontier. And in 1940 Denmark became a Protectorate of the German Reich.

From Odense I went to Silkeborg, the lake district of Denmark, a region of brown and purple heather, where sandy pinewoods covered the low hills, cool green beeches fringed the shore, and the quiet lakes stretched a clear silvery chain at the foot of the ling-spread hills. Lilies floated on the channels which linked the lakes; ramson, the white-flowered garlic, spread white on the green-fringed shore, herons and waterfowl flew from the islands—the Paradise Isles, they are called—on the lakes of Julsoe, Borresoe and Birksoe. Julsoe leads to the Himmelbjerget, the “Heaven Mountain” of the Danes. You could if you wished, be helped to heaven with the aid of an alpenstock, as there were some elaborately carved ones in a kiosk on the way. But most people preferred to walk unaided to Paradise, since the ascent is only five hundred feet. Most guide-books say that Himmelbjerget is Denmark’s highest mountain, but this is not so. You must sail on through the lake-chain to Mossoe, the largest of the lakes, for the highest point in Denmark. This is Ejler Bavnehøj, not far from the old town of Skanderborg. From Himmelbjerget you look over the moorland country of Jutland, the region richest in Danish folk-tales. Hans Andersen’s Ellefolk dance in fairy rings, and you can hear the Elle woman’s spinning-wheel, reminding you of Irish fairy tales. Here too you can meet those droll little creatures the Trolde. Like the Leprechaun, the Trolde will bring out his gold for the sun to shine on, and will play the same impish tricks on men.

It was however cement rather than gold that the

people in one part of Jutland at anyrate were concerned with in the summer of 1938. At Aalborg they were working to supply the first consignment of cement sent from here to Germany. It was a rush order, destined for the Siegfried Line, and was to be delivered by the fateful month of September, 1938.

It was at Aarhus, the capital of Jutland and the second oldest town in Denmark that I met the Flashlight Fiend for the first time. There is in the botanical gardens the Gamle Bye or “ The Old Town ”, a collection of old buildings taken from different parts of Denmark and re-erected here. You could walk through a village as it appeared three hundred years ago, streets, lanes, gardens, and square, a watermill and the Borgmester’s house, whose windows were filled with brandy cakes, old china, and tallow dips. Into this byegone village came the Fiend with photographic apparatus, who threw a magnesium flare or a bomb into the Borgmester’s house. I saw the creature twice again, once in St. Clement’s cathedral, and on another occasion in a church. There was something indecent in the way this person rushed into sacred buildings, threw a thunderbolt and made off. In St. Clement’s a blinding blaze of light from a dark corner of the church had revealed Maskelyne Moonlight. I turned to chase the creature, and hot in pursuit ran into the arms of a scandalised Lutheran clergyman. I never saw the Flashlight Fiend again.

Near Aarhus I made friends with some Jutland natives, folk who lived on the bog south of Viborg, and from them learnt many folk tales. The old couple, a Jyder shepherd and his wife, told me of a Christmas Day they once spent with their married son in Copenhagen, and of the Danish Christmas Tree. How a whole room was given up to it, and its branches

threaded with "Angel's hair", the gold and silver tinsel of our own Christmas trees. To give full effect to the illuminations of its coloured candles, the guests were brought from a darkened room to the tree with its fairy bells shining between the branches, and frost and silver stars sparkling amidst the green. Round the tree the people joined hands, and as they moved in a circle, they sang the old-time hymns. After that one of the old folks would tell the children the Christmas fairy tales that Hans Andersen made for them a hundred years ago. Perhaps it would be "The Snow Queen", and eager little shining eyes would grow round with wonder as Grandmother said :

"And when the snowflakes fell they grew so big that they looked like great white birds." And she might point to their own Christmas tree and tell them the story of the Fir Tree in the deep forest who, each Christmas, saw the other trees round him being cut down, and longed to be taken too, because the sparrows had told him that "we looked through the window and saw the trees planted in a warm room, and decked out with such beautiful things, apples, sweetmeats, playthings, and hundreds of bright candles." Next Christmas his turn does come, and he is dressed with gilded apples and walnuts and little wax coloured tapers, and dolls dance among his branches, and "he has bark ache" waiting for the evening when the children will dance round him in all his bright glory.

Such tales gave colour to the bleak land of the Jyder shepherds, whose country I was to leave for a very different part of Denmark when I travelled through the tidy trim little country of Sealand, where the gardens were so like English ones, and where the homesteads and farms were precise and self-contained.

Sealand, but it should be Cowland, cows, cows and cows, browse, drowse, and sleep till we came to the ferry. I never knew till we crossed from Gjedser to Warnemünde, that so many people could be sick on a steam-ferry. It was a different sea indeed that day from the one described by Andersen when he wrote in *The Little Mermaid* “ Far out on the wide sea, where the water is blue as the loveliest cornflower and clear as the purest crystal.”

Travelling with me as far as Aachen were a Rumanian, his German wife and their Italian-born boy, a Finn, an Englishwoman, and a Danish woman. The boy, a beautiful child of seven, with thick black wavy hair, eyes like shining bog-pools, and a brilliant smile, spoke Rumanian, German, French, Italian. The grown-ups talked politics with the utmost accord. We discussed the growing commercial rivalry between Britain and Germany in Scandinavia. Britain had been able to increase her exports to Scandinavia ever since she went off the gold standard, but by 1938 the margin of her advantage over Germany was narrowing, owing to the intensive efforts which Dr. Schacht, at that time President of the Reichsbank, was making for economic penetration into the Baltic countries.

“ Whenever two Imperialist Powers start a trade race, that is the time the real danger of war begins ” the Englishwoman said to the Finn.

“ This is going to be more than a battle between the mark and sterling, though ”, replied the Finn. But this did not draw the German. He had suddenly become silent.

I stayed the night in Aachen and very early the next morning went through the forest. On the top of its ridge I looked across in the direction of the Ruhr,

whose name was given to it by that Celtic family who are found in Ireland as Clan Ruari. On this hill there is a compass, and the names of principal cities are marked against its points. *N.W.* was Amsterdam, *N.* Oslo. I did not like that direction as much as the next, *N.E.*, which pointed to Stockholm and Leningrad. Nor did my thought-lines run out *N.N.E.*, even though Moscow lay that way; it meant going through Berlin, and I liked that city as little as Hamburg. I turned *E.*, that was better, facing Prague and Vienna. *E.S.E.* better still, you were going to Constantinople. *S.E.* would be fine too, Banjaluka, Athens. Turn *S.* and you were looking to Marseilles, yes that called me too. *S.W.* was the direction of Madrid, Lisbon, Paris. No, I didn't want to go there. I had gone the round of the compass when I came to *W.* It pointed to London. I turned home.

## CHAPTER VII

### "NO ISLE IS LOVELIER THAN LERINA"

ON all the Riviera there is no town like Old Antibes. It stands sharp-etched in my mind since the day when I stood on the walls where its bastions rose on the Ligurian site of a fortified settlement, and I looked across to Nice, the city of the Ionian Greeks. The snowy chain of the Alps stretched beyond, and between Nice and Antibes lay the sea, deep blue, with purple shadows sweeping fanwise on its surface. Westward rose the scalloped shape of the Estérel.

Antibes lies on the Aurelian Way. To this day could be seen that Roman inscription in the wall of the Hôtel de Ville : "It is a boy from the North, aged twelve years, who danced and pleased." By an odd twist my mind was searching east and west for an answer : who was that lad ? And the thought of him, a stranger in that Roman city, brought a queer twinge of grief. The Romans made Antibes the military port for their station at Cimiez, but one can never think of Antibes as Roman. In feeling it is still Greek, and remains Antipolis, so named from its position opposite Niké. In all its history it has never long been undisturbed ; it has had Visigoths, Lombards and Saracens in succession. Before Nice went back to France, Fort Carré on the sea-wall of Antibes was a frontier fortress between Italy and France. Past its tall dull-gold towers and the russet-red roofs

of the old walled town which thrust out into brilliant blue, I walked to an inn where there were dishes that made your table a Provencal paradise. Sea anemones cooked in wine (*violettes de mer*), oursins, shredded cod with garlic mayonnaise, vegetables and potatoes, the *aioli complet* of vraie Provence. And then replete with the blessings of an epicurean feast, an appreciative palate, and a prime digestion, I took the long road to Cap d'Antibes where sea-cineraria clustered everywhere, its yellow heads like small sunflowers; where mallow splashed red about the hotel gardens, where the lovely rock-bathing offered sybaritic scenes in a land where you bathe in light as in water.

From the sea wall of Old Antibes I first saw Nice rising white across the deep blue of the Mediterranean, Nice that was Niké of old, signifying victory, the city founded by the Phocceans of Ionia, who landed here in 600 B.C. with their storied memories of the golden Argonauts, who brought the figs and the cultivation of vine and olives, with their great civilisation to the western Mediterranean. Nice, after the Phocceans had conquered the Ligurians, the ruins of whose Cyclopean walls outside the city still remain, was always Greek, and Ponchettes between the town and Villefranche was an important centre of the Phoccean colony.

Like most Latin seaport towns Nice was the scene of horrors in the French Revolution. In 1794 the guillotine was busy in the Place St. Dominique, and "The Temple of Reason" was written across the doors of the cathedral. It was the city of Garibaldi, and to Italy it was in 1938 still Italia irridenta. It had belonged to Savoy, but had been so often taken by France that it was a city in a state of perpetual siege. But Nice of her own free will had chosen to re-unite with France when in 1860 the Kingdom of Italy was

constituted. On a tablet in the Church of St. François de Paul, you could see how many men with Italian names had fought for France in 1914, Alberti, Annibale, Cavallero, Giudicelli, Veneziano. The language that they spoke was Niçois, that despised tongue. But it is purely Provencal, the Latin of the Roman soldiers and a language of Languedoc, and it is not an Italian patois.

Listening to a bad café orchestra in Nice I thought how jazz music and Argentine dancing ill became a land so traditional as the Riviera di Ponente. And of traditions Nice kept up one of the very oldest in her Carnival, for the flower customs, the dances, the decorated chariots, were the heritage not only of Greeks but of the earlier Ligurians. These Greek floral games became in Roman times the Saturnalia ; macabre ceremonial, since the M.C. was put to death at the end of the rites. The confetti and the flowers of the Carnival today had replaced the Greek cakes of rice with which Old Chronos was honoured. In the Jardin Publique (once a marsh where people shot wild fowl) was the beautiful Greek fountain of Tritons which Lascaris brought from Constantinople. Lascaris himself was a descendant of Theodore Lascaris, Emperor, who lived in Nice when exiled from Byzantium.

At a fish restaurant on the Quai du Midi, where the Greeks are said to have first landed, I lunched on rouget (red mullet) and John Dory, with bellet, the white wine of the Var valley. And then made a leisurely search for some Irish links in the town. The Place MacMahon, which was the centre of Nice, where the Casino thrust its ugly head into the Baie des Anges, honoured in name the great Irish soldier, Marshal Patrice MacMahon, President of the French



Republic. And there was the cemetery of Nice "which holds the dust of a little Tipperary woman who wrote in the English language some of the best studies of French real life in the nineteenth century".<sup>1</sup> Like Maria Edgeworth, another famous Irish woman novelist (who too had a learned and literary father, and who too wrote of France), Julia Kavanagh was so tiny when born that no one thought she could live. Like Maria Edgeworth, Julia Kavanagh wrote of Mme. de Staël, and her *Frenchwomen of Letters* and *Woman in France in the Eighteenth Century*, show she was a keen critic, in which again she resembled Maria Edgeworth. "Everyone has an idea in France" she once wrote, and nothing is truer of France than that. In the cemetery of Nice where she was buried in 1877 there is a marble monument to Julia Kavanagh, with this inscription in French: "She rests from her labours and her works do follow her".

Another Irish woman novelist, Marguerite, Countess of Blessington, visiting Nice in 1822, wrote of it in her Memoirs: "The streets are unclean, and the large square is the most cheerless and filthy I ever saw. How different would Nice be with a colony of English tradespeople!" How different indeed. The English colony who did settle in Nice, came, long after Lady Blessington's day, to live through one of the most trying war experiences in 1940. With British subjects from other Riviera towns, they had rushed after the fall of Paris to Cannes, where two colliery vessels were to take them to England. Their three weeks' voyage in the crowded boats was a story of that stoical endurance for which the British people are justly noted.

<sup>1</sup>R. J. Bennet, *Cork Weekly Examiner*, 19th August, 1939.

Hundreds of their fellowcountrymen were however left behind, and their plight in Nice became pitiful. Some were sleeping on borrowed mattresses in the streets, penniless and often hungry.

In Nice the inhabitants had built houses worthy of their lovely setting, not only on the hillsides but on the way to Cap Ferrat. In which Nice had proved more fortunate than Cannes. It was worth the long walk out from the town to reach that little harbour of St. Jean, with its boats of green, blue, and red, its houses of buff and terra cotta with bright green shutters, its scents of pine, and thyme, and burning wood, and its arches of bougainvillea spilling over the terraces. The quay was built by galley slaves from Villa Franca, "Free Town", but ironically named it must have seemed to those slaves. In the cemetery of St. Jean a Gallic cock, symbol of resurrection, stood over the monuments to the dead. In the distance round the Tour St. Hospice the swifts flickered like gnats. Dark had long fallen when I turned homewards, sensing that intimacy of earth that a hot land gives; far to the east La Turbie twinkled from the heights of the old Aurelian Way; the dark shape of Mont Agel brooded beyond it, and below the Tête de Chien, Cap d'Ail stretched darkly into the sea.

Through Old Nice where the singing birds made me think once more of Seville, I walked one afternoon round Cap Mont Boron to Villefranche. Long life to that good auberge, Hôtel de Rade, where *gauche*, a Niçois cake of crisp batter tempted the traveller. There was an eastern look about this port with its brown flat-roofed buildings and its tall palm trees, but there were parts where the cream-pink tints and saffron shades of houses showed that Italian influence remained in this French seaport. Villefranche has

one of the finest natural harbours in Europe, and in that summer of 1938, when the cry "to Paris!" was hurled by Mussolini's soldiers from over the frontier to France, I thought how much Italy would like to have her Villafranca back! In the harbour I saw boats from Senegal, and wine-laden *tartanes* from St. Tropez, and there were lateen-sailed vessels, the larger ones like Roman galleys. And in the Port Limpia, so called from its clear waters, was the boat that sailed to Corsica.

Villefranche was one of the busiest towns on the Mediterranean after the "Peace" of Munich in September, 1938. From that time till the surrender of France in June 1940, French dockyards and harbours were never more active. The same thing of course was happening in England, where the upshot of that "Peace" of Munich was to make the people more warlike, and Britain live up to her astrological reputation of being governed by the martial sign of Aries. And the wiseheads recalled Tacitus, who said that the Germans when they signed a treaty, held the pen in one hand and the sword in the other. They remembered too the Philippic speeches of Demosthenes, "A Dictatorship is not, generally speaking, to be trusted by free States, especially when they have common frontiers with the dictator one. Philip, like a recurring plague, grips countries which think themselves at the time, quite out of his reach. As he himself is in sole control of the army and finance, he is in a position to make a military advance just at the right moment."

I thought of gases blighting this flowery land and of the bright sky dark with death, when up through the hills of Provence I drove one day from Villefranche to Grasse, leaving the olive line for fields of roses,

poppies, mustard flower, for terraces of jasmine, for green 'plateaux and then for rock rose, pinks and vetch, and peacock and purple-emperor butterflies. Grasse was founded by Sardinian Jews who liked their new home well enough to call it Gratia; and in the eighteenth century it was as much a centre of fashion as was Bath. But it is the views from Grasse much more than the town itself that enchant the eye of a stranger. Stand on the Avenue Thiers, and in the air that is golden and rare as champagne, look over the flowered land to the sea from which once rose the Roman god, foam-dripping Nereus. The valley that slopes from Grasse to the sea is all a garden of jonquil and violets and tuberose, yellow cassia, orange-blossom, the yellow egg-shaped fruit of the Japanese medlar, and earlier there are endless anemones. All this went to make Grasse the greatest perfumery in Europe. In the Maison Fragonard, they would tell you how four million lbs. in weight of orange petals and nine billions of jasmine blossom were used in a year for perfume. How musk roses were picked in the early mornings of May and June just when the dew was about to go, and the flowers were on the point of opening. You would see the dark yellow acacias whose perfume was extracted for bouquet scents, and heliotrope and mignonnette, and you could walk through a herb garden and find aspic, thyme, rosemary, lavender, rose de Mai, hyssop, and geranium leaves, all used for the perfumes of Grasse. There were violets too, but not all these were used for scent, many were kept for candied confections.

Grasse might also have been called Grease, for in the perfumeries you could see the vats where they melted fat for distillation, where the petals were covered with melted lard which absorbed the scent.

Pig-grease and perfumes, the meeting of extremes. Flowers and flowers, scents and soaps. No wonder that the strict observance of Lent was too much for such a luxury town, so on every Thursday in the old days they used to hold games and dances with Rabelaisian gestures in the public square. But when I saw the citizens in 1938 they were a sober and industrious folk, busy not only with rose pomades and bouquet scents, but with bottle-making and packing in glass factories ; and in the doorways of their homes or in dark archways, old women sat spinning wool and plaiting straw for hats.

An Irish name associated with Grasse is that of the General Maximilian Ulysses Browne, commanding the Austrian Army of Maria Theresa, who occupied Grasse with his forces which exacted a crushing sum from the townspeople. When he left Grasse on February 2nd, 1747, we are told that "*l'arrondissement poussa un long cri de joie*". The German soldiers of the Irish General were not loved in Provence. And this town of-fragrant airiness that seems to dance in light, has seen the dark shadow of the guillotine on the Cours. By the statue of Fragonard, who with his perfumery made Grasse the City of Scents, flowed the blood of nine victims of the Revolutionary Tribunal.

Through the tangled glory of the flowerfields I made my way down to Vence. At a bend in the road I looked back to the town among the hills, Grasse the Garden City. .

I came to Vence at the English tea-time. I remember this because the English cafés were busy serving travellers with afternoon tea. The English with their bric-à-bracs were everywhere in Vence ; nowhere was the British passion for collecting more in evidence than in this city of the Var. I had no doubt that I

could find an English estate agent here as I did in Beaulieu ; the idea of English people selling other people's land in the most desirable situations in Europe has always amused me. Vence stands a thousand feet above the sea, and like most other fair cities in Provence has had a history most bloody. By the law of compensation perhaps, the bloodier the battles, the more the troubadours have lyricised these towns, and Vence has had her share of song. More than a thousand years before the foundation of Rome, Vence was the capital of the Némésians, a Celto-Ligurian people between the Loup, the Var, and the sea. Then came the legions of the Cæsars who made Vence the capital of Roman Gaul, and the tribal gods of the Ligurians were driven into the dark caves of Baou, where the priests of a later faith came when they hid in these caves to say Mass during the French Revolution. Many chapters in the history of religion can be read in Vence indeed. Huguenots and Catholics fought with ferocity, the Catholics ascribing the visitation of the Black Death in 1572 to the heresies of the Huguenots, and the Huguenots regarding the plague as a sign of the divine wrath for the sins of the Catholics. In the Place de Godeau stands the phallic stone, christianised now by the cross on its summit ; the cathedral rises from ground on which the Romans once worshipped Cybele, goddess of fertility, and where they practised Taurean rites, as you might discover if you looked at the inscription on the seminary opposite the *mairie*. All through Provence this worship of sex, of creation, is strong ; the Goat was made in a golden image at Vallauris. And even today they know how to dance the *rigadoon* in Provence, though its original wildness and obscenity are veiled in the modern form.

St. Paul du Var, like Vence, was a twisting town, its streets a crazy maze. You entered it by a passage only two yards wide with an archway overhead. It was a fortified town, as could be seen at once from its three gateways, placed one after the other, and its walls rising out of rock from the Malvans valley. In olden times it was an observation place for the Var region; in 1938 it was noted chiefly for its artichokes, its tourists, and its white fan-tailed pigeons. It *should* also have been noted for its cemetery, which was a beautiful one, looking out over the garden of the Var with its figs and plums, its peach trees, almonds and medlars. Cypressess rose dark against the white marble tombs, and down a winding street in this old brown-walled town a file of donkeys trotted. It was surely a place for painters. One at anyrate had been busy in the auberge where I had lunch; on its maize-yellow walls he had made a picture of St. Paul du Var in strong bright colours. This inn was 'vrai Provençal', though not mentioned in guide books. From its terrace, across the Vallauris jars of geraniums, you could see through the amber sunlight Cap d'Antibes and a sea of jade and turquoise. I looked away north to the grey *baou*<sup>1</sup> of the Pénitents Noirs; in the valley below was one of those generous farms, a Provençal *mas*, with a splash of blue on its yellow walls. The sunshine struck like an arrow of gold a dark ilex oak; a flower-laden lorry rattled down the road. It was a far cry from Clerkenwell, and my rooms in a sunless street.

When you have seen these hill towns of the Var, you will most certainly want to visit a rock town. So go to Eze. It is one of the wonders of the Côte d'Azur,

<sup>1</sup> Provençal for 'rock'.

its very name, derived from Isis, a proof of its antiquity. It is a hill-town that was once a city, having its own consuls. High above the Moyenne Corniche, perched on its rocky foothold, and looking out to sea, it was inevitably raided by corsairs who, while they seized it as a stronghold, yet destroyed its fortress castle. Like many of these Mediterranean rock-towns which have spacious views over sea and shore, Eze itself is extremely constricted, and the narrow alleys and dark arches of this treeless town were a contrast to the strong sunlight outside the city. Eze was so built that all its houses together formed something like one fortification, so that space had been sacrificed to defence. The entrance to the city did not lead to the centre of the town but to the outer part, this too being for reasons of defence, so also the slits in the walls for pouring boiling lead over too venturesome raiders. Radios roared from its “ streets ”, you would have thought that one set was enough for a footway little more than a yard wide, but the inhabitants thought otherwise, and several sets, emitting different sounds, blasted you as you passed. But once you would have heard the music of troubadours here, the songs of the Catalan minstrels Blacas and Blacasette, though how they could have been inspired to compose love lyrics in this sunless town it is not easy to say.

It is only when you have scrambled down the mule track from the Moyenne Corniche among boulders, resolutely avoiding other paths that trickle off the main, do you realise how strongly defended by nature is that eyrie of Eze. That way down from the Moyenne Corniche to Beaulieu on the Basse Corniche is a treat for botanists. Here was spike lavender, mint sweet and varied, honey-scented spurge ; there was wild madder, rose-pink rocket, yellow musk ; there were



orange-tip butterflies, and the bees that provide the subtle-flavoured honey of Provence, above all the honey of the Estérel. And by this track that Barbarossa's pirates used when they climbed from the coast to sack Eze, I came to Beaulieu, the hottest place on the Riviera.

I was always scornful about the name *Petit Afrique* for Beaulieu until I found that *Petit Afrique* had turned the milk sour and the butter rancid. And it might have turned an opulent traveller back to *La Réserve* at Villefranche, most famed of all gastronomic centres on the Riviera. But others would be lured into staying, by the flowers and fruits of this tropical town. There were pink and cream oleanders, silver mallows, lovely pink convolvulus, blood-red pistachios, the great cactus, *Opuntia*, from Brazil, and there were aloes brought from Central America, and from which ropes are made ; there was the blue palm of Arizona, the Japanese medlar which is really a Chinese plant ; there were oranges, lemons, prickly pear, and giant palms, all imported ; indeed much of the botany of Beaulieu is exotic.

It was near Beaulieu, not unsuitably, that I found a group of English people called *The Peasants*. They were a little community of people who lived on each other by co-operative effort. It was a remarkable mutual credit system. I had heard of this colony first through an old office colleague with whom I had once worked on a paper in London. It was during a period of constant strikes, and these had provided some minor comedies in our office. A typist, known by her colleagues to make the most of free car rides at this time, would come panting into the building, walk into one of the Staff rooms, and sink into the nearest chair. With wide staring eyes,

dilated nostrils and open mouth, she looked like an apocalyptic mare. Kind "Mr. Norman", believing her to have walked miles in the stern path of duty, would send out the office boy to make tea for two. But behind his back he was called Norman the Mormon.

And it was here, not unfittingly in Petit Afrique, that "Mr. Norman" with his polygamist propensities, had established himself with his satellites. It was all very ridiculous of course; this abstraction from the main stream of life was so much misdirected effort on the part of social failures. And yet when we have all become rationalised, what will be left to tickle our sense of the ridiculous? With all their drawbacks we could at least laugh at such human follies as the dancing manias of the Middle Ages, at men who lived in trees today because they thought they were nearer heaven that way, at people intensively educated who believed that Jews practised hideous rites in secret and who said with emotion-choking voices "Our Leader tells us", at Americans who panicked after a broadcast version of Wells's "War of the Worlds", believing that men from Mars were advancing on New York. And at the good folk of Guernsey who on Christmas morning in the year 1939, decorated a stone image in a churchyard with garlands of flowers, and attached to one a piece of paper with a prayer beseeching the statue to stop the war. The figure was that of Atargatis, a goddess of the ancient Syrians. But not only did the war abroad continue, it was to overtake Guernsey itself, many of whose inhabitants were to become exiles. O adamant Atargatis, how different might the world have been had you but deigned to hear the prayers of your faithful suppliants!

It was from a hillside beyond Beaulieu that I first saw Monte Carlo when it seemed one great glare, with the limestone, the hills and white terraces. The mountain called Tête de Chien (but looking always more leonine than canine) which crouches over Monaco, guards too Monte Carlo, that city of Mammon. A sham city, where no one might look poor, where all was stage-set, and where the cleanliness had overreached the point of virtue. Dull to death between seasons, except that it permitted you then to study more closely the psychology of the habitual gambler. With the season, came the English with their great teeth, their hee-haw mouths, their good nature and their graceless walk, to help to pay the taxes for the Monégasques who themselves lived tax-free.

I went to the Casino one Sunday morning. There was the silence of a church, but in this temple the god was Money. It was a dull business altogether, no longer was it gold that glittered, counters were a poor substitute. Old women with pouchy eyes, chains of chins, and flashy rings, were playing trente-et-quarante round the 20-franc table. It was a strange sight to find women in bathing-trunks and brassière here, and yet to see others fully dressed, turned away because they carried a coat. And the size of a woman's handbag was debated by two officials before the owner was passed for the tables. A man might come in without a coat or tie now, a far day from the one on which an English duke was refused admittance to the Casino because his trousers were turned up at the bottom. In a room upstairs sat the men who worked out the systems of other people, but the one system that remained constant was that of M. Blanc, who capitalised the Casino in 1862, "rouge gagne

quelquefois ; noir aussi quelque fois—mais *Blanc* toujours.” On the first list of shareholders was the name of Cardinal Pecci, who became Pope Leo XIII.

It is strange to connect the tables with the conversion of a famous Irish writer to Catholicism.<sup>1</sup> But Monte Carlo brought Oscar Wilde into the Catholic Church. When Wilde was at Magdalen, Oxford, his friend who later became the eminent Benedictine, Abbot Hunter Blair, was always hopeful that Wilde would be converted, and believed this would happen if Wilde went to Rome with him. Wilde said he would like nothing better, but he “ was broke ”. So Hunter Blair said that he himself was going to Italy, and added “ I will stake a couple of pounds for you at Monte Carlo, and if it is predestined that you are to come to Rome, I shall certainly win the money ”. Oscar’s friend did stake two pounds for him, and with this money won nearly sixty pounds. He telegraphed to Wilde who then joined him in Genoa, and the two went on to Rome, where they had an audience with the Pope. Though Wilde was not received into the Church till on his deathbed in Paris, yet Dom Hunter Blair said that the visit to the Vatican was, he believed, “ the high water mark of Oscar Wilde’s *rapprochement* to the Catholic Church ”.<sup>1</sup>

There were two people I was really sorry for in Monte Carlo. One was the postman whose lot it was to deliver mails at the tiers of terraces that rise so steeply from the station up the Moulins. The other was the bored-looking croupier at that 20-franc table. “ Les jeux sont fait. Rien ne va plus ” Echoing his last words I went to Monaco.

<sup>1</sup> “ Oscar Wilde as I Knew Him ”. Abbot Hunter Blair. *The Dublin Review*, July, 1938.

Across the Bay of Hercules lies Monaco, as old as its opposite, Monte Carlo, is new. Here the Phœnicians from Tyre and Sidon, sailing in their horse-headed ships, set up a temple to Melkarth who was Herakles to the Greeks, Hercules to the Romans. Here was the Greek city of Monakos, the Only God. My first sight of Monaco was not from the Bay of Hercules but through a pergola of saffron-yellow roses and perfumed heliotrope on a terrace of Cap Fleuri. It was perhaps the best view of Monaco, but the cars which raced along the Basse Corniche never saw it. The villas here are so thick upon one another that but for the greenery of palms and laurels, the hillside would be all red and yellow. High above, on the ridge that runs to the Tête de Chien, is the white fort of Mont Agel, which bristled with French troops during that time of tension before Italy in 1940 entered the war against France.

All round Monaco, on the Heraklean Way, there are traces of Ligurian fortifications, relics of a resilient race of intrepid fighters, who harassed the Romans on every stretch of the coast. Into the Bay of Herakles rode the Carthaginian fleets, and later came the Genoese archers who swarmed on the rocks of Monaco, and then Guelphs and Ghibellines with their feuds which split the city into faction fights. Above terraces of aloes, cypresses, prickly pear, and geraniums, on the summit of the granite rock, stood the palace of Monaco, where once rose the Phœnician temple to Melkarth. For nearly seven hundred years the Principality had been in the Grimaldi family. It had no agricultural land, for the whole of the Principality had been built over. All its land frontiers were, at the time of my 1938 visit, in France. Only eight square miles in extent, it was the smallest country in

the world. Like Monte Carlo, Monaco was then excessively clean. But it was not always so. In 1631 the plague had come, and this, said the monks, was due to the dirt. The inhabitants were therefore driven into the sea and scrubbed, and with them went their belongings. The results were excellent. Like its neighbour too in our own times, Monaco's sense of order went beyond external tidiness; strikes were not allowed, so when they occurred elsewhere on the Riviera, Monaco benefited by an influx of visitors from the affected towns.

It was Sunday morning when I rang the bell of the Anthropological Museum. "May I look over the Museum please?" "I am very sorry, Madam, but it is closed on Sunday". But before we had finished talking, that kind curator had not only opened the door to me, but had asked me to share the family lunch. The negroid skeletons he showed me in the Museum were the most important of all the finds at the Balzi Rossi Caves at Grimaldi, farther along the coast. For their discovery brought to light the existence of that negritic race in Europe to which the name Grimaldi had been given.

Monaco's most famous museum however was the Oceanographical one. This stood up, a splendid building on the edge of the Rock of Monaco, its white face turned to the blue sea. It was founded by that gifted naturalist Prince Albert I, as the first marine museum in the world. Everything that you ate in your *frittura*, or in your fish stews, you could see in the tanks here, rock fish and ray fish; scorpaenidae posturing, with their fins like wings, spreading and dipping in a ballet dance, and there were the feathery fishes of the South Sea, the *Scatophagus argus* of the Indian Ocean and Java, with tails like spotted chiffon.

And as well as an Eskimo *kayak* the whole life of a whaler could be seen. To walk through this museum was to wander through a world-under-water.

I left Monaco and Monte Carlo for another world on the Sunday morning when I sailed for the Lérins islands with pilgrims and picnic-makers in the tiny steamer humorously christened *Le Titan*. Lérins takes its name from the Greek god Lero and his sister Lerina. These names are easily recognised in many of the Aegean islands today ; on fortifying the fretted coast of Leros, among the Dodecanese islands seized by Italy after the 1914-1918 war, Mussolini spent vast sums. Though one of the smallest, Leros is strategically the most important of the Dodecanese group, and has been called Italy's Gibraltar. The Ligurians from Asia Minor, largely a pirate people, with their chief centre at Genoa, practised even in Roman times their dark rites in the woods of the Lérins island now known as Ste. Marguérite, where there is also an inscription in Greek and Latin to the god Pan. Poor Pan, he would have found it dull in the year 1938, sporting among the monks on the sister isle of St. Honorat.

The two wooded islands of St. Honorat and Ste. Marguérite lie beyond the promontory of the Croisette at Cannes, and to these islands came Honoratus the Roman patrician, born of pagan parents in Gaul, founder and first Abbot of the community of Lérins. Seeking a hermit's life after baptism he had gone to Cap Roux near Agay. But like St. Kevin at Glendaloch his reputation for holiness brought him the publicity he shunned, and from the crowds who flocked to his mithraic cave of St. Baume he fled once more, this time taking to water. Wisely he chose the remoter of the Lérins isles. There was nothing here to tempt

visitors on this reptile-ridden island: it had been abandoned by the Romans, and on account of its snakes was regarded with dread by the fishermen. Overgrown with thickets and brushwood and lacking fresh water, in those early days at the end of the fourth century it was not likely to tempt any but the most austere-minded. Among such was Patrick, Apostle of Ireland, who spent nine years here with his fellow monks; St. Augustine on his mission to England came here too with a letter from Gregory the Great to the Abbot in 595, while other notable visitors have been Pope Adrian VI, and Francis I, who fleeing from the Spaniards, sought refuge on Lérins. Its most prosperous time was in the year 999 when so many people, believing that the first day of 1000 A.D. would be the Day of Judgment, made haste to bequeath their property to the Abbey. The fact that the Abbey would after the Day of Doom be no more in a position to benefit from property than the donors would be, does not appear to have deterred the pious people from making such gifts.

Like so many places intended for the secluded meditative life, the peace of Lérins has been rudely disturbed, Saracen raids in the eighth century being followed by a massacre of five hundred monks. In the war of 1914-1918 fourteen of the monks took part. But to see in 1938 the Cistercian Abbey which had been re-established there by the Sénanque Congregation, as an estate so substantial, so efficiently managed, was to guess little of its earlier history of turbulent times. Days when from the gold-brown tower of St. Honorat the monks gave word of the coming of the dark felucca sails and the white turbans of the Saracens, and beacons blazed up from Agay to Antibes. In the French wars with Algeria three hundred Arabs



were held prisoner here, and on the neighbouring isle of Ste. Marguérite, Germans and Austrians were interned in the 1914-1918 war. They could look across to Cannes and see the hotels which some of them owned, the villas they lived in. But they might have had a worse place for their imprisonment than this pine-scented island. Most famous of all its prisoners was The Man in the Iron Mask, Hercules Anthony Matthioli of Bologna, who was sent here for treachery in revealing to the Austro-Spaniards, Louis XIV's schemes for taking Casale.

The *Titan* sailed over the crystal blue water, the channel between the two islands rippled turquoise and violet. A paper-seller on deck did a good trade with *La Vie Parisienne*, which scarcely seemed decorous literature for the pilgrims of St. Honorat. Alighting at the little pier which the monks had made, I read this notice :—"Aidez nous à conserver dans toute sa splendeur le joyau incomparable qu'est cette Ile Sainte". I thought of those French postcards in Cannes showing a *cocotte* and a bathing belle displaying their limbs for the edification of a brown-robed monk of St. Honorat. Well, the island has known the lighter side of life, as at one time it was bought by a Comédie Française actress.

But these are vain thoughts for an Irish visitor in the wake of St. Patrick. "I had the fear of God to guide me in my journey through the Gauls and Italy to the islands of the Tyrrhene Sea," said 'Adzthead', Apostle of the Irish. (According to the geography of St. Patrick's time, the islands of Lérins were in the Tyrrhene Sea). Jocelinus, monk of Furness (whose chronology in his *Life of St. Patrick* is rather questionable), tells us that St. Patrick went to an island in the Tyrrhene Sea to converse with a certain hermit Justus,

of great sanctity. That he spent some time with him and that “ the holy man Justus delivered to S. Patricke a little staffe, which he said he received out of our Saviour’s own handes, to give him.” That St. Patrick took this with him to Rome, and by it, like the Rod of Moses, wrought many wonders and caused many conversions.

In the Book of Armagh, written in the seventh century in Irish characters with some Greek capitals, we can read the Confession of St. Patrick. But it is curious that nowhere in this is Lérins mentioned. Writing of his wanderings in Gaul, St. Patrick speaks of himself as “ a rustic deserter ” from his early captivity in Ireland, as a “ beardless boy ” on a journey “ through a desert ” with shipmates. He tells how in answer to his prayers for food, there suddenly appeared a herd of swine and wild honey sufficient for all, and by these signs his companions were converted. He then says that after some years he was among the Britons with his parents, who entreated him not to leave them again. “ And there indeed, in the midst of the night, I saw a man, as if coming from Hibernia, whose name was Victoricius, with innumerable letters, and he gave me one of them, and I read the beginning of the letter, containing the coming of the Scots, *vox Hiberionacum*. And whilst I was perusing the commencement of the letter, I thought in my mind that I heard the voice of those who were near the wood of Focluti, which is near the Western Sea, and they thus cried out, ‘ We entreat thee, holy youth, to come and walk amongst us ’. And I was very much pricked to the heart, and could read no more ; and then I awoke.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The above is the translation as given by Sir Wm. Betham, F.S.A., M.R.I.A., in *Irish Antiquarian Researches*, Vol. I., p. 427.

Now the word "there" (*italics mine*) in the foregoing story of St. Patrick, is important, because it suggests that it was somewhere in Britain, and not on Lérins, that St. Patrick heard the voices which called him back to Ireland. It has so often been said, on the contrary, that it was while he was among the bare-footed monks of St. Honoratus that he heard the cries of the children of Eire, and among the authorities responsible for this statement are the Bollandist writers. For in the *Acta SS.* 17 martii, 8 IX, we find this concerning Lerinae: "*Dum ibi, per multos annos, demoratur Patricius, angelus Domini apparuit . . . ut veniret in Hiberniam*".

It is rather remarkable that St. Patrick's name is not in the Litanies of the Saints of Lérins, though the names of his contemporaries are among the forty-two given. But that St. Patrick was on the isle of St. Honorat, and was there in the year 429 when his teacher St. Honoratus became Bishop of Arles, is established beyond doubt. And in that year 429 St. Patrick prepared to visit Pope Celestine to receive his commission to preach the gospel in Ireland. When Patrick came there and banished its serpents, he may well have thought of his teacher St. Honorat, who had scuttled the snakes from Lérins. For their respective exorcisms St. Patrick climbed Croagh Patrick in Connacht, St. Honorat a palm tree on Lérins. Crouched in its fronds, like an anchorite of the east, St. Honorat prayed that the corpses of the serpents which infected the air might be removed, and so came the mighty waves which swept over the island and carried away the reptiles' bodies. That is why two palms intertwined in the form of serpents, appear in the mitre and abbatial cross of the head of the community of Lérins. St. Honorat was most probably

the island where "Adzehead" (Patrick) met three other Patricks who lived together in a rocky cave between the cliff and the sea, and Irish Patrick wished to live with them in the solitary service of God. But it was only for a time, "for God had destined him for another and loftier purpose".<sup>1</sup>

Lérins by 1938, under the scholarly Sénanque Fathers had gained once more its early reputation for being, like that other island in the Western Seas, "the island of scholars". It was a brilliant school in the days of its great men like St. Justus, St. Maxime, and St. Vincent, and till the worst of the barbarian onslaughts Lérins almost alone remained a refuge of learning. Only, says the chronicle, "les solitudes monastiques placées aux extrémités les plus opposées de l'Europe, celles de l'Irlande, et du Mont Athos, partagèrent alors avec Lérins le privilège d'échapper à la dévastation universelle". It did not however escape those scandals from which few wealthy monasteries have been wholly free at some time or other. Chonon, one of its Abbots, was reproved by Pope Gregory for laxity among his monks. So it was to the Irish Abbot Columbanus he went for a model of monastic life at Luxeuil, and returned to reform his own Abbey at Lérins. In the middle of the fifteenth century the gravest abuses were taking place there, the monks even coining money for the Levant and trafficking in all manner of things. But in 1938 all you might bring away from St. Honorat besides objects of piety and a learned history, was the excellent *eau de vie* made by the monks.

That arch-jester, Dr. Oliver St. John Gogarty, came to Lérins, as I did, in search of St. Patrick.

<sup>1</sup> J. Healy, D.D., LL.D., *Insula Sanctorum et Doctorum*, p. 192. Sealy, Bryers & Walker; Gill & Son; Burns & Oates, 1890.

But unlike me, he refrained from looking at the coast of the Var from his steamer, so that his first sight of the snowy sunlit Alps should be as St. Patrick saw them, from the island. For my part I was looking more at the mainland than the island, as the fiery red rocks of the Estérels against the blue sea kept me entranced till we landed at the monks' pier of St. Honorat. Dr. Gogarty has musically translated the Latin poet's lines : "Pulchrior in toto non est locus orbe Lerina", "no isle in all the world is lovelier than Lerina". The pilgrims and picnic-makers probably thought the same ; whether on food spiritual or material they were bent, all looked in harmony with their surroundings.

A long avenue of cypress trees led from the landing-pier to the monastery, and the end of this tunnel was a dazzling blue ; so we had already seen the other end of the island. Even here the mistral leaves its mark ; the pines have all been bent in one direction. Today in the wind, they creaked like the masts of ships, and by the red trunks of these Aleppo pines and the silvery leaves of the rose and white cistus, we came to the monastery gates. I followed the pilgrims to the Abbey entrance, only to suffer the common disability of my sex who were vouchsafed but a glimpse of the cloistered court while their more fortunate men-folk filed through the doorway. But there was so much to see outside the Abbey itself, of which only the cloister is part of the earliest building, that there was not time to be disappointed. There were the flowers of brilliant colours, feathery palms, giant cactus leaves carved with visitors' names (one with "Scotland for ever"), *pin parasols* which showed the battle of the winds, and there were the seven chapels on the island, one with Cyclopean walls telling of the

older settlers. Sweet herbs grew everywhere on the far side of St. Honorat, where on the rocky islet of St. Feréol, covered with blue irises and pungent with a rue, the monks were once slaughtered by Saracens. On this lonely rock of St. Feréol, the body of the great violinist Paganini had been buried for four years. He had died in Nice, and owing to his sceptical views, had been refused Christian burial by the bishop. The body of the maestro had been taken from place to place, and not till thirty-six years after his death did Paganini finally rest in peace at Parma.

Down on the shore by the brown-gold tower of St. Honorat, fishermen waded, turning over the stones with small hand rakes. They were looking for worms as bait, and one man was carrying them in the crown of his straw hat. Back from the bright blue water I turned to the woods ; tablecloths made a spread of white against the red bark of the sea-pine, and with all the ritual that attends a Provencal meal, picnic parties were commencing. And when the last flagon of red wine had been finished, a merry pair stood up, and I saw something that was never seen out of Provence. For they danced from the heart of their people, using platters as cymbals, and there was poetry and rude humour in the tale that they told in that dance. And a lad with a melodeon played an air that blew down the Rhone valley and across the dun plains of the Camargue and over the tower of the gipsies' church at Les Saintes Maries and away out to sea to the pine-covered island of St. Honorat.

The sound of the wind in the trees mingled with the wash of the waves was like an organ prelude in some cathedral. The ceaseless *cicada*, whose sun-song is

like the winding of a watch, the orchestra of insects, and the croaking of green frogs whose "brekekex" is like Aristophanes' chorus, made the "isle of repose" a lively one.

As we sailed back to Cannes that evening when the igneous rocks of the Estérels burned flame-bright in the wine-red glow of sunset, looking back on St. Honorat I remembered how the name of another Irishman had come to be linked with the island. It was the Comte de Browne, commanding the Austro-Sardinian forces against the French in 1746. From his camp at Cannes he bombarded the fort of Ste. Marguérite, and the Croats in his army reduced the garrison of St. Honorat which had only twenty men. When the people from Cannes swarmed over to the island to take refuge there, they only found ruins. Few islands indeed have had a more turbulent history than Lérins, the place of seclusion and meditation. But the traveller on that Sunday morning in July 1938 will remember St. Honorat as much for the happy spirit of its pilgrims as for the peace of its pine-wooded monastery.

The previous time I had sailed on the Mediterranean was on a small *tartane* to Cap Martin. That Cape is all an aromatic garden, where the scented smilax twines round the shrubs of the sweet herbs called the *maquis*. The plants of the *maquis* need special protection, and there is no moisture in that hard earth, so nature has made them aromatic as a protection against animals. April is gay with the lovely little lupin and the mauve stellar anemone which have followed the heliotrope and orange-crowned narcissus; spring is a blaze of broom, and the air is heavy with the honeysuckle vine. Summer brings more colours with the large pink flowers of the big marigold, the

violet 'candytuft, and yellow banksia roses. With its pines and olives, yuccas and ilex, its pearly foam breaking on its rocks, the sea a dazzling sweep of blue from the wine-gold Estérel to the snowy Alps in Italy, Cap Martin was a fitting place for the last hours of the greatest of Irish poets, William Butler Yeats. "In the judgment of not only my generation but of his younger contemporaries, Yeats was the greatest of all living poets" said Desmond MacCarthy, when news came of Yeats's death at Cap Martin on January 28th, 1939.

Æ regarded Yeats as the greatest writer of his age, greater than Shaw. Another well known Irish author, Robert Lynd, wrote, "he has bequeathed a body of verse rich in imaginative magic and in a style in which only a great artist can enshrine the discoveries of his sense and spirit". And the playwright Lennox Robinson, paid his tribute in these words: "I think of Mr. Yeats first as the finest poet writing in English during the last hundred years". In the hills above Cap Martin, Yeats could often be seen in a bathchair at Roquebrune, lion-headed, vigorous in speech though his heart was failing. In those regions rich in lore and legend there were fertile fields for the mind which had ranged from the Celtic imagery of Ireland to the starry lore of India, and the tales of Old Japan.

When I heard of his death I remembered how his old friend, Madame Gonne MacBride, had in her early years gone to live near Cap Martin, just after a warrant for her arrest had been made by the British on account of her fights against evictions in Dossenal. And here at Cap Martin, she wrote she "was greatly amused when Willie Yeats sent me a poem, my epitaph he had written with much feeling :



*I dreamed that one had died in a strange place  
Near no accustomed land :  
And they had nailed the boards above her face  
The peasants of that land.*

It was by a curious fate that Yeats should have been the one to die in that "strange place". He was buried at Roquebrune cemetery, and at his graveside stood his wife, Dermot O'Brien (President, Royal Hibernian Academy of Arts), and Lennox Robinson, then a Director of the Abbey Theatre. Mr. Michael Yeats, the poet's son, went out later to Roquebrune to make arrangements for the body to be brought to Ireland for burial at Drumcliffe, Sligo. No more fitting epitaph could be written of one of Ireland's greatest sons, than Madame MacBride's utterance: "In the words of his own Caitlin ni Hculihan he 'will be remembered for ever'."

Despite the universality of many of his ideas, William Butler Yeats was peculiarly a man of his age. He died the day before Adolf Hitler made one of his biggest Reichstag speeches. Listening to the thunder of the Fuehrer over the radio, and turning to the wise quiet of the Irish poet, I thought how these men stand for two ages; the one of action, the other of reflection. Yeats had died in a land where there was still leisure, where the dynamism of the new age had only slightly shaken the sunlit towns of Old Prussia, where the tremors of impending earthquake had not as yet disturbed the lives of peasants for a few hills behind the Pleasure Coast. It was time for the traveller then, to turn nearer to the epicentre of the quake, the Land of Thunder. I decided to go to a tiny country surrounded by Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, the little land of Liechtenstein.

## CHAPTER VIII

### IN LILLIPUTLAND

TINKA HÉRÁNYI, my Hungarian friend, who was spending a holiday in Switzerland, met me at Basle and saw me off at the station. She pushed something through the window. It was the umbrella we shared at home. I recoiled from it. "Do I ever take an umbrella abroad?" In any case I had left our own fretful climate and was going to a land of sunny meadows, where the cult of the sun was still practised, as could be seen from the way so many of the houses were built at Vaduz, Liechtenstein's tiny capital. As the train went off, Tinka pushed something else in. It was a copy of Ralph Bates's *Lean Men*. Long before I got to Vaduz I realised that even if I had never been to Spain, I should have understood the *Lean Men* (Spanish) so much better than I did Ralph Bates (British). I could not agree with Bates that "the reason for the fundamental sadness of life" is an economic one. Unamuno seemed nearer the truth in his *Tragic Sense of Life*. So too Olaf Stapledon in his essays, and so too Gerald Heard in *Pain, Time and Sex*. Among some of the English writers who shared Bates's political views, there was a certain puritanical priggishness. If however, one reacted sharply from this, one welcomed such writers none the less, for once past their period of tortured introspection these authors showed the right approach to life, and came out in revolt against

fixation of ideas. In England, and much more so in Ireland, numbers of people suffered from fixity of ideas, from an inability to adjust themselves sufficiently rapidly to changing circumstances. Ireland, exhibiting more than once national neurosis in the midst of a world war; Ireland monkish and suffering from a psychosis, had need of, and lacked, writers with rationalised emotions, in this critical period between 1936 and 1941. And yet such writers would have gone unread by the Irish people then. For it is our habit in Ireland to talk rather than to read. And as talkers we are the world's best, while the English are surely the very worst.

The intelligence-average of the Irish workers is higher than that of the English, their minds are more agile, more eager for knowledge; where you have intellect in England you have intelligence in Ireland. I have never heard of any songs in the Irish language like the *Zummerzet Zongs* of England. The Irish countryman has never by his own people, been depicted as the slow-witted Varmer Giles has by the English; nor would the pace of Old Uncle Tom Cobbley and All, jogging all a-long, down a-long, out a-long lee, on Tom Pearce's Grey Mare to Widdicombe Fair, suit the tempo of the Kerry-men who come down from the hills to Puck's Fair at Killorglin, where the songs are racy, where the music lilts to quick rhythms and life pulses to rapid time, for all the external leisureliness. Any picture of an Irish Dumble-Dum Dreary would be too far out of character for acceptance, for the Irish peasantry has not only wit but keen intelligence. It is just this wide diffusion of intelligence in Ireland which makes that country so delightful to live in. If you seek intellectual sophistication you must go to England, a country

moreover, enriched with Jewish intellect in the recent years of continental persecution. And, let us make no mistake about this, the articulate English themselves, though relatively small in numbers, have very vigorous mental power. The majority of the people however, are shrewd rather than intelligent, and certainly unimaginative. If you want intellect much more widely diffused you must go to France for it. But these generalisations, made only on the lowest common denominator, have necessarily thousands of exceptions. Besides, there are well-marked regional distinctions in the characteristics of English people, a fact which social surveys have not yet sufficiently taken into account. The genuine Cockney for instance shows more sociability, less inhibition and snobbery than any other English type does. Even in the County of London itself there are broad areas which differ from others in mass-characteristics. (Diffusion of types through evacuation, was a factor of the war period commencing 1939 which in England as elsewhere, produced social changes.)

These reflections occupied me on the journey to Liechtenstein, because my fellow passengers were English, and they started a political discussion, a thing rare enough among English people before the German invasion of Prague in 1939. No nation in Europe has as many different creeds and causes as the English, a people individualistic in their actions, who would fight to the death for their personal liberty, but who, owing to some mental laziness in their composition, had too often in the past been willing to surrender their mental freedom to their press and politicians. But who could expect anything but complexities and contradictions of a race so mixed as the British? Looking at the English passengers in the train, at the extra-

ordinary divergence of type in one small group, I concluded it was no wonder that anthropologists had found in this small island one of the most fruitful fields for investigation.

Some of these travelling companions were venturesome folk, determined to get as far as the Danube delta at a time when a European war seemed imminent. At Buchs close to the St. Gall Canton, I left the Orient Express a little ruefully, envying those long-distance travellers their ride to Bucarest and Stambul. But have never been sorry for the notion that sent me to the Principality of Liechtenstein. At one time "to be in the centre of things" had some attractions, certainly for tourists and sensation-seeking journalists, but it was doubtful whether by 1938 such a position on the map of Europe was so desirable. Liechtenstein was very much at the hub, with Switzerland on her northern and western boundaries, Austria limitrophe with her eastern frontier, Germany over-topping her northern boundary beyond the Swiss canton of St. Gall, and Italy lying south of the Grisons. To be nearly equidistant from four capitals, Rome, Paris, Berlin, Vienna, which could be reached from Vaduz, Liechtenstein's own capital, in twelve to fourteen hours by train, had its disadvantages as well as otherwise by 1938. After Hitler had annexed Austria, Dr. Joseph Hoop, the head of the administration of Liechtenstein, had gone to Berlin to ask what the Fuehrer intended doing about the Principality.

Up till April 1939, when he delegated his authority to a nephew, the ruler was a benign old prince who lived in Vienna. No, he could not be called an absentee landlord, his Schloss at Vaduz was quite uninhabitable and was only kept up as a museum.

Besides he was very popular, liberal, and derived no revenues from the Principality. And the Liechtenstein Palace in Vienna had always been the real home of his family. Prince Ferdinand of Liechtenstein went to Helsinki in 1940 to fight for the Finns; "I couldn't stay at home when Finland is fighting for liberty" he said. "I won't be the only man either from my country to come to Finland".

No trains ran through Vaduz, so at Buchs I got into the bus that took one to the capital through an orchard-valley watered by a quiet reach of the Rhine. Over the town hung the hoary old Schloss which made Vaduz as feudal in appearance as it was free in reality then. Memory leaped up from my first picture-book days, how I would beg for that story over again, each time adding new chapters myself to "The Castle of Liechtenstein". No wonder they put it into a fairy tale; here was the wood for witches, here the rock for dragons, beyond, the snowy mountains for the Ice Maiden. The bus stopped at the top part of the town and I got out here to select an inn. I chose the Gasthof zum Engel and never found a better hotel in my life. It was odd to see in this tiny town, that of the two Consulates one represented Persia. The Consul for the Netherlands was to prove a good friend during my stay in Vaduz, so also the chief of the seven khaki police who maintained order in the Principality.

In Vaduz I picked blackberries big as sloes, fruit from trees so laden that most of them required propping up, and on the Feast of the Assumption I watched small girls in red and dark-blue checked frocks twining grape clusters round Our Lady's Statue in the church. I never discovered who was responsible for carving the Irish emblem of the shamrock on the Sacred

Heart Statue, but the church itself, a fine Gothic building, was planned by the man who designed the notable façade of the Rathaus in Vienna.

Vienna, capital of a State that had become a province of the Nazi Empire. And that evening, listening in Vaduz to a Mozart concert relayed from Salzburg, I wondered what music the joyous-hearted Wolfgang Amadeus would have made had he been in Austria to-day. Mozart's Aria and Alleluia that are sung in heaven, winging notes and trills of larks in his Violin Concerto in A ; how hard to decide which you like best, his Violin Concerto in D, his Symphony in E Flat, or his Second Symphony in D Major. And then one thinks of those cascades of rippling notes in his Pianoforte Concerto in D. It is almost as hard to come back to earth after the glad-heartedness of Mozart, the grandeur of his harmonies and the delight of his frolics, as it is to march to glory to the strains of a Lithuanian band, or to listen to the treacly-sweet melodies of some English café music after hearing Bach's Violin Concerto in A Minor, or the Allegro movement in Brahms's Third Symphony.

You could scarcely have found a more colourful capital than Vaduz with its houses of lemon, pale green, pink, mauve. Though on the borders of Austria, they were not Austrian but Swiss in character. There was in 1938 a population of 1,400 in Vaduz, and only 10,000 in the whole State of 15 villages. But statistically Liechtenstein was one of the most over-populated countries in the world, owing to the numbers of people who, preferring the amiable administration to the autocratic régime of certain other States, had become citizens of the Principality. The income tax at that time was certainly attractive to foreigners, it was only one per cent., and the State

had no national debt ; its revenue was largely derived from its picturesque postage stamps.

Through fields of yellow pumpkins and giant sunflowers I walked to Schaan, the largest town in Liechtenstein. By the edge of the Ebenholz forest I went through meadows of gold-red solidago, campanulas, salvia, and elder trees drooping with fruit, where men pushing small hand wagons passed me, and I came on wayside shrines as in the Tyrol. Here was all the intense life of the country, the hundred incidents that may make an adventure of any walk where wild life is still left to us. The spire of Schaan's church rose out of a sweet flowery meadow, with the Drei Schwestern mountains rich in legend, rimming the distance. At Schaan stood a memorial to those who fell in the war of 1914-1918. It would not have been there at all if Liechtenstein had had then a union with Switzerland instead of Austria. After that war Liechtenstein suffered when the Allied blockade allowed no food into Austria ; this increased the desire for an economic union with Switzerland, which was brought about in 1924. Customs, and all foreign affairs, were then directed by the Swiss Confederation at Bern, and Liechtenstein was represented abroad by Switzerland.

There was no army in Liechtenstein, it was abolished in 1866. In the courtyard of Schloss Vaduz I met Andreas Kleber, the last of the old soldiers ; he was then ninety-six and he still wore his uniform. " I refused to give my uniform up after I had fought in the Austro-Prussian war ", he told me. " That was more than seventy years ago and I am still a soldier even though there is no army. " " Old Soldiers never die " I answered, but I thought he must be rather lonely, living in a world of yesterday, and with



none of his comrades left to talk with him of " battles long ago ".

I also met the Regierungschef or head of the Government, Dr. Hoop, a man of wide culture. One sensed a true democratic spirit in his offices. Without any formality whatever I was taken in to see Dr. Hoop by his secretary who, as the day was hot, was working in his shirt-sleeves. We talked a good deal about different Constitutions.

" Ours resembles in many ways the English one " Dr. Hoop told me. " We have a single Chamber and at present only two parties. The difference between the Government Party and the Popular one, which is the Opposition, is really not great. Both parties are progressive. I should like to know more about the new Irish Constitution " Dr. Hoop added, so when I got back I sent him a copy of *Bunreacht na hEireann*.<sup>1</sup>

Triesenberg, a village near Vaduz, was interesting for something more than its famed winter sports. Here was the Alma Bruderhof, a branch of the Christian community which I had visited at Ashton Keynes, Wiltshire. This brotherhood movement began in Germany in 1920, when Dr. Eberhard Arnold and others, feeling the need for a new way of life, founded a brotherhood near Frankfort. Its aim was " to show that a life based entirely on love, as expressed by Christ in the Sermon on the Mount, is possible here and now ". People of many different nationalities were to be found at the Triesenberg community, where, as at Ashton Keynes, all property was held in common, and only the simplest needs of life were provided for.

<sup>1</sup> Irish Constitution.

The Bruderhof in Germany had once received considerable support from the State, but when the Nazis came into power it could not expect to be left long in peace. In 1937 it was raided by the Gestapo, the property confiscated, and its members, all of whom were pacifists, were expelled from Germany. Fearing that Liechtenstein would be absorbed by Germany, and that military conscription would follow, the Triesenberg community had left Liechtenstein and joined their fellow-pacifists at Ashton Keynes.

Once I had visited that colony in Wiltshire, but unfortunately had found there that I could not lead the life of an Early Christian. At the Bruderhof I found the catechism I was put through by one of the women so embarrassing, that after slicing my share of beans in the allotted task, I beat a retreat for the train home, realising however that most of the members of that community seemed practical idealists, leading a joyous and useful life in their Christian commune in which all things were held in common. Many of us will freely share our experiences, but to be asked questions for which you must search the inner man for an answer, is disconcerting to anyone not of Tolstoyan simplicity. The picturesque pacifists of Ashton Keynes, many in the peasant costumes they had worn in the parent community in Liechtenstein, were to present a picture strangely out of time in the Year of Disgrace, 1939.

In Triesenberg, Liechtenstein, you could hear the old Alemannic dialect, very different from the German spoken in Vaduz, but oddly like English. There is a curious word in these parts, *Zürschg*, which is thought to be Romanisch in origin, for by this way came the Roman legions. A *Zürschg* is an inn with two doors used by riders in olden

time. They would come in through one door and ride out on another horse by the second door. Many people had been riding in and out of Liechtenstein in 1938, though they did not come in on horseback. Liechtenstein had in 1866 been a member of the German Federation. When Austria defeated Prussia that year, Liechtenstein joined Austria. Liechtenstein's history therefore, as well as its geographical situation, was not overlooked by Nazi neighbours. The life expectation of small States was by then a short one, but sitting in the *Weinstube* of the Gasthof zum Engel, eating the trout that Maria Ozpelt cooked, you could for the time forget the European volcano, and even drink long life to Liechtensteiners.

Do not think that things moved slowly in this Lilliputland. On the contrary. I was having lunch one day when, strangers to each other, the English occupants of two cars, one of which had rushed from Vienna through some of the loveliest country in Europe, came in to the hotel for quick drinks. And the only remark that passed from the driver of the first car to the driver of the second was, "What did you do it in?"

## CHAPTER IX

### YOUR PASSPORT PLEASE

FROM Liechtenstein I crossed into Switzerland, travelled to Interlaken, and then by the mountain train we passed the little flowery village of Wilderswil and gorges where vapour steams from waterfalls, till we reached Grindelwald with its rock bastions of the Wetterhorn. Peaceful now, washed in sunlight, but in winter its avalanches have brought huts and trees crashing into the valleys, a whole moving landscape. And the reason why the houses in Grindelwald are scattered is to prevent fire spreading when the *föhn* or hot dry wind from the south sweeps down the valley. In parts of the Alps they call this wind "the Schneefresser, or snow devourer, since it melts the huge drifts and pulls the trigger for those avalanches that can shoot a hamlet away as clean as a bullet out of a gun."<sup>1</sup>

Grindelwald would have been a happy valley if it had not been for a few of its summertime tourists. I had chosen my room for its views but had reckoned without my neighbours. They were a party of Englishwomen on a No-War mission from some Higher Life hostel in London. They had kindly but tiresome habits, such as knocking on each other's doors with early cups of tea. There are few things more touching perhaps than the persistent kindness of women to

<sup>1</sup> D. L. Kelleher.

each other in hostel life, and I myself have reason to be grateful for it, but I don't like pillow tea, and dreaded the sounds of early cluttercups as much as cheap wireless sets. One of the inmates did table-turning and hand-painted trays; she wore a still-life hat, a green girdled robe, and vegetarian shoes, that is to say they were made of pampas-grass, not leather. She looked like the Spirit of Spring. She told me she had an Irish grandmother, and I felt sure that on March 17th she would break out all over in shamrock. Late one night at the Grindelwald hotel there was an accident. One of the inmates on the top floor had sent in the dark a tray crashing down the uncarpeted stairs with a noise like stage thunder. A skittle sound of milk bottles followed, and some china cannoned off my leg as I came up to my room.

"Has anything happened?" asked an intelligent and anxious voice far below as a hail of china descended. The inmates now all ran out, looking like the Rout in *Comus*. To the horrified watchers below it was like some poltergeistic phenomenon. The lady who did table-turning had a room on the top floor, and was certainly on a Higher Plane; could it be that she was manifesting her powers to communicate with the Unseen? But she was staying that night in Interlaken. Had she then returned in her astral body and was now experimenting with her hand-painted trays? In the darkness it was impossible for the listeners, except those who had received some of the missiles, to tell what had come down the stairs. It was likely that the trays and bric-à-bracs that the table-turning lady designed were among the showers of hard-bodied substances; any moment the transpersonality of the medium herself might appear, and the inhabitants were listening for

the sound of tambourines that would surely herald her ectoplasmic appearance. Noises indicative of surprise, anger, and fear from the women who, running amok, looked more than ever like animals, caused me to tremble, it was terrifying to meet them all like this. High above all could be heard the shrieks of the Clucking Hen. Dressed in cinnamon and with winged sleeves she looked more than usually like a Buff Orpington in flight.

By the end of the fourth day the hotel had come to irritate me so much that the only good thing I could find in it was the Emmenthal cheese. There is great consolation in good fare. If I could find a place where there was Aran Island mutton, Shannon trout, Dutch steaks, Danish and Viennese coffee, Swedish cold meats, Grecian stews, French ices and Languedoc omelettes, Provencal soups, Hungarian goulash, Wensleydale cheese, and Cornish cream, then would I most certainly live in such a gourmet's paradise.

From Grindelwald the railway runs to the Jungfrauoch, the highest station in Europe, and from there you may, if you wish, lash your body to a rope, and armed with an axe, like a warrior of old, set forth to battle with Giant Silberhorn. *Excelsior* for all who enjoy blue noses and frozen feet and blistered lips and airless sleep in mountain huts, and food from tins and tea from flasks. But not for me. My world is two-dimensional; send me to the plains to cure me of ills for which others seek the mountains. I will rise to greater heights on the level than on the peaks. If I am to become really rhapsodic, send me singing over the brown wastes of the Camargue, and may I reach Paradise by the Great Plain of Hungary. So I have no wish to live among the cowbells of Kleine Scheidegg under the scarp of the Eiger. And even

when I look from this Alpine wonderland on some of the grandest mountain views in the world, I know that there is a curve of Mount Brandon in Kerry and a sight of the far blue Carpathians from Ruthenia that I would not give for all the snowy Alps in Switzerland.

But the climb from Grindelwald to Scheidegg, which is only the start of the big ascents, is a wonderland for botanists. I spent most of a day on the slopes of the Eiger letting trains and times go by, because there were fairy forget-me-nots, purple gentians, pink Alpine roses, blue butterwort, pale blue campanulas against the shining snow, and bright little yellow and purple pansies and honey-laden blossoms on which lovely patterned butterflies trembled. Never do flowers smell so sweet as in these Alpine uplands, where the mountain air has a fragrance more delicious even than the pine-dark hills of northern lands. The higher you go in the Alpine valleys, the brighter the flowers become; nature has never painted blues brighter or deeper than in the bell flowers of the *alps*.

Above the Scheidegg plateau tower the peaks of the Jungfrau, the Mönch and the Eiger. The Young Maiden is beguiling the merry old Monk to cast off his cowl of snow, while the Ogre looks round the corner in anger at such improper proceedings. Indeed the Jungfrau on any picture-card looked anything but a modest maiden, but then she is no longer unconquered, for two men, the Aarau brothers from Meyer, made successful assault on her virginal peak in 1811. But she is still beautiful to all who may care to look on her in the early morning, when she shimmers in her gown of cold crystal blue.

Coming down from Scheidegg I passed the herds-men's huts where the cheeses were made; these were the true *châlets*, the suburbs of Grindelwald. The

came lower levels and finally Lake Thun. My first sail on Thun was on an afternoon when the mountains pushed thirsty tongues into the water which shimmered in the heat. The lake lay like a turquoise set in a dish of silver, but before I had said this, the pyramid peaks of the Niesen and Stockhorn had changed to an azure blue and then to a deep violet. This was the day and the way to come to Spiez with its red-brown spires and towers rising up through trees that made a thick green fringe to the lake. I wanted to move those little toy churches about and make new pictures with the trees and spires and red gables. Spiez was a child's play town. In a café here I was foolish enough to argue with a German-Swiss, because he started attacking France. She was grasping. She had backed up Britain in the blockade of Germany after the Armistice in 1918. She had treated Germany brutally at Versailles.

"France was vindictive at Versailles, but she is less grasping than Germany which is eating up Europe," I said. "The blockade by Britain and France after the 1918 Armistice was a bad business, but blockades never cease automatically with an armistice," I went on; "and do you know that Britain sent 70,000 tons of fats and oils for the relief of the Germans after 1918, long before supplies were released for British people? Would the Germans have done even that for the British and French if things had been reversed? The Germans were harsher in 1870 when they kept their troops on French soil till the indemnity was paid.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> After the German invasion in 1940, unoccupied France was forced to pay for the maintenance of the German armies in occupied France a daily sum which, computed by yearly payments, was more than three times the maximum annual tribute fixed for German payment of reparations by the Versailles Treaty.



As for Versailles, do you think its terms were out of proportion to provocation, considering that Germany had deliberately tried to strangle the economic life of France by wrecking her factories and industries in the north? And though Versailles brought oppression to numbers of people, it did also liberate eighty million others."

The Spiez man's temper was rising. I think he was more German than Swiss. He interrupted me to commence a long semi-philosophical discourse about the 1914-1918 war guilt, delivered in loud abrupt tones, which he emphasised by banging the table with his fist. I thought how ugly he looked, and how sweet reason could never avail with men of his type. And there were so many of them in Europe today. After civilisation had struggled till it had at least reached an *approach* towards a moral and rational system in some parts of the globe, the realisation that mankind was now being forced back into the Dark Ages was a melancholy reflection.

But I couldn't deny the validity of some of his arguments. If the vengefulness of Versailles was understandable, the hostile attitude of Britain and France to the progressive pacific Republic of Weimar was not. And I knew of the case that Alfred von Wegerer had made against the Allies over this question of German War Guilt in his *Widerlegung der Versailler Kriegsschuldthese*. And there was the alleged conversation between Clemenceau and General French in 1910, when the French statesman and the British soldier were discussing what would be done when war with Germany came. It was recounted (though I have never come by anything to prove the truth of the story), that Clemenceau had told General French that French troops would march through

Belgium into Germany. French had asked "What about our treaty with Belgium?" And Clemenceau had answered, "Treaties do not matter when it comes to war!" Other revelations, awkward for the propaganda of the Allies, had been made by Lenin who, when the Bolsheviks came to power, had made public the Treaty of London, the treaty arranged by Nicholas II and Poincaré. The Russian Revolutionary Government had published the texts of other secret agreements, some arising out of the personal diplomacy of Edward VII, "the Peacemaker". Nevertheless, the fact remained that Germany, or Prussia, had been responsible for five wars in Europe within the last hundred years.

Le Bon was the author of many wise words which written in 1917 were being fulfilled twenty years later: "Après avoir été successivement à base militaire, à base juridique, puis à base économique, les sociétés semblent retourner à l'état purement militaire."

The Nazi-minded man, having delivered himself of his diatribe against Britain and France, started then on the German communists. "The only thing I have against those communists" I answered, "is that they helped the Nazis to overthrow the Weimar Republic. And, talking of the Weimar Republic," I added, "Hitler instead of vilifying the Czech President, Benes, should be praising him for trying so hard to get England and France to help in the reconstruction of Germany during that liberal Republic."

The Swiss Nazi got into such a rage that I fled not only from him but from Spiez. Locarno now lay on my map, and to reach it the train makes so many spirals from Kandersteg that the railway had been called the Tantalusbahn. Bells pealed out over the

valley of Goppenstein where the fields were blessed in June, and where at the station the workers who built the Lötschberg Tunnel had been commemorated. From the custom in most places I had expected to see a statue of the architect or chief engineer, but was pleased to see here that a simple model of a Swiss workman had been chosen. Here is the head of the Lötschental, an old-time valley, which has provided the Popes with their Swiss guards. And here you could find even after 1930 the system of 'tallies', or wood with notches which showed the amount of the communal pasture to which a peasant was entitled. The actual boundary between Switzerland and Italy was at a point halfway through the Simplon Tunnel, then the longest tunnel in Europe, through which you ran for over twelve miles till you came blinking into daylight near Isola di Trasquera. At Domodossola, over the Italian frontier, we changed for Locarno, and in a trolley car rode by the Centovalli Railway through a moving panorama of wild loveliness. Most of my fellow travellers had turned our crowded compartment into a dining saloon, but the English lady next me was turning it into a beauty parlour. For the first two stages she was manicuring with such thoroughness that I postponed my lunch till the end of the journey. I thought of those quaint travellers, Jan and Cora Gordon,<sup>1</sup> with their leisurely penetration of Lapland, the Balkans, Languedoc, and Maine, and of the girls they described as having "travelled half across Europe without one definite memory except that of the difficulty of keeping the hands clean: they had manicured adventure out of their characters." And as the Gordons sagely

<sup>1</sup> *Two Vagabonds in Sweden and Lapland*: John Lane, 1926.

remarked, "concentration on cleanliness is apt to distract from invitations to a wider interest". I defy any Englishman to maintain home standards of cleanliness and see the best of the Balkans.

On to Locarno, in and out of tunnels, hanging over the ravine of Tofana, and sighting now a shoulder of Santa Maria Maggiore with little yellow houses freckling the fields above the valley of Viguzzo. And then a burst of blue, Lake Maggiore, with Locarno a splash of white. The praises of Lugano have outsung those of Locarno. There are two things for which I prefer Lugano; one is the view of San Salvatore from the Parco Civico, and the other is Capolago. There are two things for which I prefer Locarno; one is Lake Maggiore, and the other is the Madonna del Sasso. The Madonna del Sasso is perfect. Who can want to see the far-famed Borromean Islands up the Lake when they can visit that joyous and ancient place of pilgrimage, the lovely Renaissance church on that creער-covered rock a thousand feet above Lake Maggiore? Walk up the long hill to see better than the funicular can show, the old buildings that cling to the church. Come to the wide shallow steps that lead to the lovely little piazza in front of those cool arches, tall and airy, and look up to the red-brick campanile of this fifteenth-century church. Walk along the terrace and you can idle hours away in a world apart. It does not belong to the age of the busy city below, the perfume of its flowers has a fragrance of olden memories. Look down over vines, oleanders and fig trees on the curve of land and sweep of water from Luino to Bellinzona, water blue as the hydrangeas that crush themselves against the sun-gold church. The Madonna del Sasso dreams on.

Now St. Charles Borromeo once came to the place

where Brother Bartholomew, the Franciscan of Ivrea, had seen in 1480 the Blessed Virgin. "To this holy ground", said Borromeo, "the nations of the world will come in the course of time." And so they did. "In 1925", said D. L. Kelleher, "Austen Chamberlain of Birmingham, Aristide Briand whose great grandfather was one O'Brien from Ireland, Luther the German, Benes the Czecho-Slovak and others of the leaders of the nations of the world came here, as we have seen, fulfilling that prophecy." For by the Mutual Guarantee signed at Locarno, Germany, Belgium and France resolved never to go to war against each other. And the signatories guaranteed the status quo in the west as fixed by the Treaty of Versailles. All had been left Swiss-tidy in the Conference Chamber in the Palais de Justice of Locarno, just as on that day of October 16, 1925, when Benito Mussolini sat next to Austen Chamberlain and signed for Italy, and seven other names, including that of the Mayor of Locarno, went down into history. But when I visited it thirteen years later, every State in Europe represented by those signatures was an armed camp.

On the shores of Lake Maggiore I found many small colonies of intellectual refugees from Germany. ~~And~~ talking to several, I wished that some psychologist would discover the way of a mental black-out; for individual troubles, so far from being forgotten in the events then shaking mankind, were sharpened by those very issues. Emerson said that the needs of life were much fewer than people supposed; that the two great needs were good talk and plenty of solitude to brood and dig deep. These exiles had both in plenty, but with their tragic memories the fulfilment of these needs brought them no peace of mind. My talks with these men convinced me that it is German

intellectuals in particular who show that in so many cases the top minds of men are simpler than those of women, but that their sub-conscious is a tangle. Perhaps because so many men are less brave morally than women, and so evade fundamental problems.

On the third day of my stay in Locarno I was asked by an English writer and his wife to tea in their villa above Magadino. This was a village which few tourists visited even by 1938. It was an enchanting little place, straggling up the slopes of Tamaro through lemon groves and limes, magnolias and cyclamen. From the villa, towards evening, I saw folds of blue mountains like mythical monsters lapping up the lake-water of a melting glacial age. Fishermen in cradle-covered boats were singing in Italian, bells pealed faintly from a far campanile, clouds of rose and gold floated above the icy peaks of the shadowy hills. One might have felt "the sleep that is among the ancient hills" if one had not known that beyond those mountains was the marching of Fascisti and sacrifices to another god of war. In the summer of 1940 Maggiore itself was not such a peaceful region. It was crowded with refugees after British bombs had been dropped on Milan.

My host and I were sitting on the terrace and our talk turned from letters to politics. "Locarno", said my host, extending his arm in the direction of the city on the opposite shores of the lake below us: "What a brave new world was nearly born there in 1925!"

"Yes", I said, "and ten years later it was revealed that Germany had increased her army and her Luftwaffe by an unknown quantity."

"An occasion which disclosed what ineffective provisions had been made by the framers of the

Locarno treaty", replied my friend. "You may remember His Majesty's Government made the curious pronouncement that 'A violation of a treaty was not an act of aggression calling for joint action under either the Versailles or the Locarno compacts; there must be an actual military invasion of territory of a member of the League before she could be called upon to help to enforce the provisions of the Covenant.'"

Blue dusk had changed to violet when I said goodbye to my friends at Magadino and started on my journey down the fruitful valley of Ticino to Bellinzona, that fine old fortified city with its three ruined castles, Schwyz, Uri, Unterwalden. Bellinzona has checked many a wave of northerners surging into Italy, and for this city the Swiss and Milanese have fought ding-dong battles, for those who hold this town hold the key to the Gothard and San Bernardino passes, as any traveller can see when he approaches the city. And the last battle had not been fought there, I told myself, knowing that it might be only a matter of time before Switzerland would be torn by the rapacity of new Empire makers. No wise man would fail to get out of the train at Bellinzona, walk under the arch of the Piazza Nosetto and look at the brown and warm-yellow houses and their old arched doorways. For these he could well miss the castles of twice-towered Uri, the scalloped Unterwalden, and the frilled wall of Schwyz.

The St. Gothard tunnel cost the lives of eight hundred miners, and the contractor Faure died of apoplexy in one of the unfinished spirals. Now, out of the night-black tunnel of the St. Gothard you come into sun-bright pasturelands; even the light at the southern end seems different, it is softer, more

diffused. From the St. Gothard massif start the three Rs, the Rhine, the Rhoie, and the Reuss, and here rises the Ticino too, which flows its leisurely way south through Lake Maggiore into Italy. At Airolo in the upper valley of the Ticino, the fields when I saw them were coloured with bright yellow foxgloves, rockfoil, and golden globe-flower, and in the meadows down the Valle Levantina were high racks which the peasants call *rascane*, for drying barley. The upper region of the Ticino has been called the Valley of Waterfalls; its lower part was the richest vine-growing district in Switzerland. Yet it was hard ever to think of this country as anything but as part of Italy, when one saw fig trees and olives, flat roofs and courts; the spires of Swiss Protestant churches had given place to the campaniles of Catholic buildings, and cypresses splashed a dark shadow across their yellow towers. The trellised vine too showed that it was an Italian wine which would be pressed from the grape here. And Bellinzona, though in Switzerland, was all Italian.

In a blaze of blue, Lugano burst upon us, this city of Luini. No wonder Luini painted as he did, when he lived on the shores of Lake Lugano, though it is of Milanese art that he is the real master. The Irish painter, Æ, has said of the faces Luini painted, that their charm "is not in the fashioning of the features, but they allure us because some spirit-finger seems to have put an almost invisible hollow in the cheeks or a shadowy seduction in the lips, an enchantment over and above what the bodily beauty can give." When you saw Luini's great fresco of the Crucifixion in Santa Maria degli Angeli, Lugano, you understood very well what Æ meant.

From the cathedral church of San Lorenzo I looked across the jewelled lake up to the crinkled crags of



the Sasso Grande and the tiny villages on the bright shape of Monte Brè. In the drowsy noon I walked through the Portici di Via Possida among the stalls of luscious fruits, and into the Parco Civico. Who would not murmur *dolce far niente* as he sat by the lake's side here looking over the trembling blue to the vineyards of San Salvatore. But Lugano has never charmed me as it has so many other people. I like it chiefly because it is the starting point for Capolago, and I was not long taking steamer for this little town of fishermen lying at the foot of Monte Generoso. The postcard prettiness of Morcote and Gandria on other parts of the lake never drew me to see these much painted villages. Capolago was a place of flesh and blood. Here Mazzini had sent out rebel literature from the Helvetian Press to rally his Italian countrymen to rise in freedom's cause. Here I saw fishermen set out in their *camballi*, and at the lake's edge I watched women scrubbing clothes on sloping boards and carrying away the washing on their backs in a *gerla*, a pointed basket.

From Capolago a railway ran to the top of Monte Generoso, and the day I made that trip it was enlivened by an Italian matron, black as a raven, who carried on a commentary, much of it very witty. She talked so torrentially that my head spun, thinking out problems of relativity thus : If *A* was the beginning of her sentence and *B* the end, *C* a person standing at a certain point on the line, and *D* the train, which was climbing at the rate of 5 miles in 60 minutes, would *C* see the train before——. And then I would have to start all over again because that handsome old hawk would bring her stick down on the carriage floor as she emphasised some point on someone's toe. When the train stopped at a wayside halt, she got out

and swooped after an acquaintance there. When we started again I saw her, still volubly chattering, in another carriage. *La donna e mobile*.

At the hillside stations tiny children ran out with bunches of woodland flowers and heather and sweet cyclamen; there were chestnut groves, rose bowers, almonds, large black butterflies, and a hundred other things to see on the way up, and when you were at the top you could walk on one side of a bridle path and be in Italy, and on the other still be in Switzerland. That was in 1938. Clear on the skyline was the vast snowfield of Silber Sattel and Monte Rosa's ridge of shining white. And seeing those five-fold peaks of Monte Rosa, the highest mountain in Switzerland, I thought of the notable man who with his three fellow climbers made the first traverse of the Zumsteinjoch, the second highest pass in the Alps, the first Italian ascent of the Dufour Peak. The difficulties of making this eastern ascent of Monte Rosa were likely to appeal to the ascetic Pope, Pius XI, who once said that his greatest wish was to go as a pilgrim to Lough Derg. Of all pilgrimages, this Irish one is the most rigorous. I looked at that icy peak which Achille Ratti, as he was then, had reached on that morning of July 29th, 1889, and I pictured it in the splendour of that sunrise when young Ratti had said "it was enough to drive a painter mad".

Those who climb the gentler slopes of Monte Generoso to look on those greater heights like Monte Rosa, let them look east of the Simplon for the Jungfrau, the Mönch, the Finsteraarhorn and other giants of the Bernese Oberland, and for the tip of the Matterhorn peeping over Monte Rosa. But I am telling others to do first what I did last myself. Instinctively I had turned south, knowing Monte Generoso to be

one of the mountains in the chain that slopes to the Lombard plain. I looked over Monte Ada and the gentle hills of the south, and saw Lake Como and the far Apennines above Bologna. I turned hungrily to look at Lombardy of the Langobards, once of the Empire of Charlemagne but in 1938 among the lands of the Italian Emperor of Ethiopia. I gazed after the cities of the plain, Milan, Vicenza, Pavia. And knew that I would be content with no less than the plains of High Asia, the prairie lands of the west, the Great Plain of Hungary, the Camargue of Provence, the Bog of Roscommon and the delta lands of the Danube. And if "civilisation" had not made a jellyfish of me long ago, I would by now be a yurt dweller, wandering with Tartar tribes who in their race-cycle know the urge which once in a thousand years will drive them westward, when, as it is said in one of their oldest poems, their peoples will sweep in their hordes "like the wave of the sea".

From Capolago I started for Como. But first I had to get through Chiasso, and this was the summer of 1938, when a British passport was enough to raise anti-British feeling. All would have gone well no doubt if I had stayed at the station and waited for a train. It struck me, however, there might be a tram going to Como. There was, but one had to get through the Customs on the road first, and there the trouble began. "In the old days the traveller knew that he was back to civilisation as soon as he saw a gallows; in our day he has the same assurance on being bidden to unlock his trunks in the Custom House", said that piquant Irish essayist, Tom Kettle. As I was the only English-speaking person passing through the Customs just then, I had the concentrated attention of Fascist and at that time, very anti-British

officialdom. One man kept my passport for so long that I began to regret the inclusion of that Lithuanian 'extra' written by the Consul over the visa. At other times, in remoter parts of Europe, it had been amusing to see officials with time to spare, puzzling over a language which is the nearest one to Sanskrit in Europe, but now it was a nuisance. In an age when you might as well lose your life as your passport, the ordinary traveller, harassed already with blocks of tickets, landing cards, travellers' cheques and a confusion of coinage, clung to that slender blue book as to a holy relic. I received mine back after an hour, from a man who spat at the credentials issued in the name of His Britannic Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. During the hour, a man who said he knew no English, read my copy of *The Times*. All six officials examined my modest suitcase in turn, and I was just going to ask why the female searcher hadn't had a dip in too, when the terrific storm which had started earlier suddenly plunged Chiasso in darkness. In the moment of confusion in the Customs, when everyone had something else to think about, I made a bolt through the open door with my suitcase. A tram happened to be near, and in a second I was in it. Let it go to Italy or back to Switzerland, I didn't care which, so long as I never went through Chiasso Customs again. As it happened it went to Como as soon as the lights came on again.

On the Cathedral of Como many writers have lavished praise. J. A. Symonds said that it was "perhaps the most perfect building in Italy for illustrating the fusion of Gothic and Renaissance styles". That is just what I don't like about it myself. I have never been able to appreciate the blending of

these two styles. Every time I have seen the Duomo I have wanted to chisel off the points of those little turrets and remove the fussy fretwork of those miniature spires. But there was classic simplicity in the nave, and the north and south doorways showed some of the best examples of early Renaissance sculpture. After the Gothic gargoyles of Milan it was a pleasure to turn to the graceful forms, the flowing lines, and the living treatment of Christian themes on those doors of the Duomo. There was a springing flowing joy from those fruitful emblems, the garlands and the water carriers. And inside the church you could meet Luini's work again in "The Adoration of the Magi". Luini was above all a traditionalist. He was among those Italian Lake painters who, born on the shores of Lugano, learned their craft at home and, "though they entered the service of great princes of Church or State, they seldom failed to return home to beautify their native parish church with the work of their mature talents."<sup>1</sup>

At Bellaggio I saw the lovely dark forms of the cypress on the marbled terraces of San Giovanni. Here was the holiday home in his boyhood days, of Pius XI. Here from his village home of Desio on the Lombard plain came young Achille Ratti to study with his uncle, the priest of Osso, for the life which was to lead him one day to St. Peter's Chair. Bellaggio and its lake shore were so tranquil on that August day when I saw them, that I forgot Lake Como is subject to Siroccan storms. Down on the water were the tall-sailed *camballi*, and men fishing for *agoni*, a small native fish which is better when caught in Lake Como than anywhere else. A lake which has been

<sup>1</sup> A. H. Lunn: *Italian Lakes and Cities*. Harrap, 1932.

loved to death, less beautiful to my mind than Lake Maggiore, less strikingly Italian than Lake Garda.

It is but a short journey from Como to Milan, whose station seemed a monument to the Italy that was born after 1918. And yet that building was in keeping with much of the earlier haughty history of Milan, an exteriorisation of that aggressive temper which fostered the Visconti, the Condottieri, military adventurers like the Sforzas, and the dictatorship of Gian Galeazzo. It was not without significance perhaps, that it was in Milan a later dictator, Benito Mussolini, inaugurated the party of Young Fascists. Has not Napoleon been given a place among the saints on the roof of the Duomo?

The Cathedral was the creation of Gian Galeazzo Visconti in 1386, and its fantastic splendour owed something to the bizarre tastes of this luxury-loving noble. It was built entirely of white marble, and we are told that 37,000 people could find room there. That the Gothic style should be found here, in the heart of the Lombard plain, seemed to me out of character. Gothic suggests icy peaks and rocky pinnacles, and these are far from Milan. A French writer had described the cathedral as "une montagne de marbre transparent", but it had always made me think of a bride cake; I had felt impious at the sight of all that fidgety fretwork, and I believe that Leonardo da Vinci who made the plans for the cupola would have felt the same, if he had seen all that bric-à-brac. Karel Capek did not like the cathedral either; in his *Letters from Italy* he wrote "from the distance it looks like a gigantic piece of dazzling antimony." When I looked at its statues on the roof, series and series of them, they began to dance like hobgoblins in my mind,

and the meaningless ornamentation by German artists of gargoyles and *giganti* had an air of theatricality, and so had that unpardonable painted tracery on the roof inside.

No, come down from all that stage property and walk to the Santa Maria della Grazie. Look on the Refectory wall there, and see an immortal vision. In this painting of the Last Supper, Leonardo da Vinci has interpreted almost every known human emotion with his study of each of the twelve men who have just heard the words: "one of you shall betray Me". That picture has been copied by an untold number of artists, but no painter after da Vinci ever painted that story of Il Cenacolo as he did. No one but Leonardo has achieved such individual distinctions of gesture and expression among the disciples. Philip leans forward in swift protest, Thomas rises aggressively, finger raised, Judas draws back, anger replacing fear even as he does so. Possibly this painting, better than anything else, shows how different from each other in character these twelve men were.

Leonardo da Vinci was a Florentine, and so was his art, but Milan from its adoption of him regards him as her son. Anticipating the discoveries of Galileo, Kepler, and Copernicus, he has been referred to as "the only instance in history of a man with an equal genius for science and for art." He was indeed the most daring painter of the Renaissance; his "Virgin of the Rocks", portraying the Human Foetus, the Ape-form, and the Divine Child, shows him to be a true son of the great age he lived in. The London version of this picture does not show what Da Vinci's original does. And the latter has to be studied closely before the amazing truth is discovered.

I suppose most people who saw the Scala Theatre in Milan for the first time were as disappointed with its exterior as they were when they reached the Puerta de Sol on their first visit to Madrid before 1940. In both cases the visitor had expected something on the grand scale, and on arriving had inevitably made comparison with the outside of some London picture theatre in the one case, and with a tramway junction in the other. The first time I went to Milan it was on a very short stay, and I joined a conducted tour of the city. During this the guide pointed out to us the French Consulate. Only a year later that place was to become the scene of a demonstration which told the world where another international crisis would arise. Bands of Italians massed in front of the French Consulate shouting, "Tunis, Nice, Corsica, for Italy!" The foolishness of committing oneself to a conducted tour of Milan was evident after two hours of precious time had been wasted in the cemetery. Why should tourists be taken to cemeteries? Is it because the English are supposed to take their pleasures seriously? I remember a trip to Paris when young and foolish and the same chilly pilgrimage was made. The half of a freezing morning was spent in Père Lachaise, and one lady who had a bad cold at the time contracted pneumonia as a result of the visit. However, as this book shows, I have myself gone out of the way to look at certain burial grounds. After 1941, there would be so many cemeteries in Europe that they would cease to interest people.



## CHAPTER X

### THE FIRST MEN OF THE MEDITERRANEAN

TO go from Nice to Mentone by the Grande Corniche, is to take the road that Napoleon laid out on the track of the old Aurelian Way between Nice and the Ligurian coast. It was the road of the Roman warriors, tall-speared, dark-skinned men, whose eagles flashed in the blazing sun before they gave place to the scimitars of turbaned Arabs. But long before the rhythmic march of the imperial legions came this way, the Phoceans had made it their inshore route to Marseilles.

"I will go while there is still room on the roads" I said. But even then, before the busiest time of the year, all a driver could see was the rear of the car ahead, and mothers must have offered unceasing prayers to St. Anthony for the safe deliverance of their children at their school doors. Twice however we were vouchsafed a view of something besides the stream of traffic. The first one was at the *Vistaero*, the inn from which you get that breath-taking view, over a thousand feet up on the Grande Corniche, where you can look over hills and sea, away beyond the Italian frontier to Bordighera. The second place we stopped at was La Turbie, where rises the Roman column on which the legions in 24 B.C. once set the massive image of Augustus, commemorating his victory over forty-five Ligurian tribes. There was all the arrogance of a Roman conqueror in that image,

gazing out over the conquered lands of the Ligurians. There it was, with its inscription "So far Italy, hence Gaul" marking the frontier here of old. And in 1940 the great fort above it was massed with men waiting for the threatened irruption of Italy into Gaul.

Along the Via Juliana which runs from La Turbie to Mentone, and where the clanking armour of the legions sent the Ligurians into hiding in their rock-caves, we drove to the coast once more, where the Riviera di Ponente begins, that "sunrise" coast which stretches to Genoa. A mclée of music from a raucous radio on the terrace of *l'Amirauté*, and an exquisite violin played by a woman in the road below, were my first impressions of Garavan, at the head of the wide bay between Old Mentone and Ventimiglia. From this renowned restaurant *l'Amirauté*, the old proprietor used to invite you to "lunch in France and look at Italy". From here, where Blasco Ibañez used to write, you could see the fishermen's barques which have changed little since the Phrygian seamen in their red caps and the Levantine traders sailed up the Mediterranean :

*I have seen old ships sail like swans asleep  
Beyond the village which men still call Tyre.*

Today the fishermen were hauling in the catch of fish much in the way of t near Málaga, where they shore 'el copla'. A file on the rope, and at each sea walked to the other er one in turn changed his po finally hauled ashore ther

catch, many of the townsfolk coming down to look on.

From *l'Amirauté* at Garavan you could look across to Old Mentone, all pink and cream, where the Phocéans of old had brought their statue of Diana from the temple of Ephesus. No town on the Riviera except Antibes, is as picturesque as Old Mentone. Partly perhaps, because unlike Nice or Cannes, it is built on a promontory and so stands up in relief. Below the campanile of the yellow church are the houses that are built upon each other at angles which make them look like a child's play-town built with block bricks. Here were arches like the dark entrances to caves; you penetrated a score of smells, thick, clinging, obdurate odours, part of the very place. The streets were narrow as in so many Provençal towns, to keep out the sun. In any case, as most of these towns were walled they could not expand, so the houses were "built high.

From the public garden of the new town you could look up that sloping flower carpet to the conical hills which horseshoe the town. That gay garden seemed to run right up to the foot of the St. Agnes Mountain, and there was not an avenue in France more beautiful, with its white palace hotels on each side of its wide flowery drive. That hill at the head of Mentone held up the lovely monastery of L'Annonciation, which rose in terraces itself like the vineyards below it. Cool blue and shadowy mauve, the hills half circled the town and cut it off from the north. So there is no mistral in Mentone. And if proof were needed of its mild climate, you could find everywhere the lemon tree whose fruit actually freezes at 3°C., whereas it could only flourish at Nice and Cannes under special conditions. For its lemons Europe has

to thank the Arabs, who brought this fruit first to Spain; it was the Crusaders who brought it to the Ligurian coast, and it came much earlier than the orange.

Mentone's fields are bright in January with large-petalled purple anemones, and with juniper berries, some grape-coloured, others of shades that painters have not yet made names for. There are the yellow-tipped asphodels, whose fruits are like small unripe tomatoes; there are groves of yellow cassia, and wild asparagus, and in October the fields are filled with purple crocus. But this town with its mild climate, hothouse botany and invalids, has shown a fighting spirit not only in 1940, but in 1848 when it rose to a man against the Principality of Monaco to which it belonged. Mentone then gained its independence and became a Republic.

One evening I climbed up through the Citta Vecchia to the Old Cemetery. And here I found unexpected links with Ireland. For confronted suddenly, with the mausoleum of the Carrolls of Carrollton, U.S.A., I remembered how one Charles of this Maryland family which traces descent from the Ely O'Carrolls of Offaly, had signed his name to the American Declaration of Independence in 1776. He lived the longest of all the signatories, died the wealthiest citizen of the States, and his cousin, the Rev. John Carroll, became the first Catholic bishop in the United States. This mausoleum has a tablet to the memory of a later Charles Carroll, who founded the American hospital at Neuilly in 1914. He was the first American to visit the Italian front in the European War, and was received there by King Victor Emanuel. This visit was one of the decisive factors in bringing America into the war on the side of the Allies.

No other cemetery in Europe has a finer situation. From its height you can look away east to where the yellow bunch of Bordighera juts into the sea, and your eye can follow the whole chain of Capes from the jagged Estérel in the west. Below you lies the Old Town, as Italian in character as Cannes is French. I looked in the evening light over the roofs of the Old Town of Mentone, beyond the yellow campaniles of churches to the blue bay of Garavan, and then behind to the shadowy hill of Berceau. In my wanderings I had not seen a fairer picture. The dead in that cemetery seemed ready for Paradise.

But this peaceful picture of Mentone as I saw it in the early summer of 1938 was to be changed for a very different one a year later. Even in 1938 it was only outwardly peaceful, for its hillsides bristled with guns. To defend Mentone from the Italians after the fall of Paris in June 1940, the French brought into action their heavy guns from the hillside on the north of the town. Between the damage caused by their own artillery and the shelling from the Italians, Mentone was a heavy casualty in the thirteen days' war between Italy and France in June 1940. "A glorious victory" was Italy's description of the Battle of Mentone, fought after the French demand for an armistice. "One of the biggest military frauds of history" was the description of one British historian, when, on June 23rd, the Italians marched into the shell-holed town.

I was in Mentone for the Independence Day celebrations of July 14th, in 1938. Everywhere the tri-colour<sup>e</sup> flew, and in the afternoon the children were sack-racing down the Avenue Verdun, and there were rowing and sailing competitions for the Hennessey Cup, which the *Michel-Archange*, 6 oars, won by a

length after a hot race with *La Nissarda*. Immense crowds gathered for the gala night on the George V terrace to see the fireworks and to hear the rockets burst with a noise like shell fire. When the town's orchestra struck up the *Marseillaise*, the crowd sang it as they never had since 1914. France in 1938 was but one year from another Great War.

The frontier stone between France and Italy stood on the bridge of St. Louis, which is just beyond Old Mentone. Actually, all of the bridge was Italian even before the two weeks' war between France and Italy in June 1940, and during that fortnight the bridge remained intact. I noticed on my visit in 1939, that the last house but one, on the French side was called Villa Irlanda.

Grimaldi-Ventimiglia, the frontier town, shows in its compound name the meeting of two race-streams, a name which must delight philologists. For Ventimiglia is Ligurian, *melo* being the name in that strange and ancient speech for 'stone'. But Grimaldi is of northern stock, from Grimm Walt, Might of the Strong, and that itself goes back to the days of the Langobards. They were the folk from the Elbe, the Lange Bärde, Long Beards, whose tribal name became Langobardi when they swept south and pillaged and burnt the settlements on the Ligurian coast. Once more a German wave would crash through the Alps, and storm again the sunny valleys of the south. Ever a pushful people, the Germanic hordes, by force of their numbers, would continue to make their weight felt in Europe.

In Rome and Milan the Fascist followers of Mussolini were threatening France with shouts of "À Paris!" but on the frontier in the summer of 1939 the tall Italian sentry fraternised with his short French

vis-à-vis. As they advanced smiling towards each other, to pass us over the frontier, I asked them if I might photograph them. Side by side they stood, friendly as brothers, *égalité et fraternité*, and I raged to think how one man with a power-complex and a score of little swaggering Cæsars should even then be trying to make these friends "enemies". "*Restez toujours comme ça, Messieurs, en bon accord*", I said, raising my camera. But one needed no photograph to recall that scene on the Bridge of St. Louis.

Napoleon and King Victor Emanuel signed the treaty which marked the boundaries between their respective States, on this bridge. It crosses a limestone gully, and above it tower masses of jurassic rock, in whose crevices the little cornflower-blue Sicilian *convolvulus*, a rare treasure, may be found in April; here too peep the mauve bell-shaped *campanula*, the yellow spikes of Chinese *buddleia*, and the tubular leaves of the mauve-lilac *echium* which has little scarlet spots like insects on its hairy stem. And here violets bloom in December, but then I have picked them wild in Devon at Christmas. Down nearer the shore I found russet orchids, lavender, and red valerian, and at the foot of lemon trees the beautiful Neapolitan lily which set me travelling in all its trail along the Mediterranean from Granada to Greece. This little white flower, shaped like a snowdrop, with bright green stamens and scarlet centres has leaves which when bruised leave a most unpleasant smell. From the gardens of the Mortola near Ventimiglia come the "*fleurs de cassis*", the acacia with the scent of violets.

Close to the St. Louis Bridge are the famous *Roches Rouges* or, as the Italians call these red rocks, the

Balzi Rossi ; in the Provençal tongue they are the Baousse-Rousse. Here are the caves which were the first to reveal the existence of that negroid race in Europe which the anthropologists have called the Grimaldi race. The Aurelian Way ran by these caves of the Balzi Rossi, and so it was the highway of ancient and modern man. On the very frontier of two armed nations, events were to be recorded once more of this meeting-place of ancient and divers races.

Right up the face of the Balzi Rossi, past the dwelling-places of our ancient ancestors, ran a steel-framed lift to a sight-seers' hotel on the top of the rocks. It seemed almost sacrilegious to one who feels as much veneration about entering a cave as a church. And after all such a cave has often been the church of ancient Man. For untold ages men have made these caves of the Baousse-Rousse their home. So too have the animals at many stages of evolution, for in the Grotte du Prince there are traces of fishes, reptiles, birds, and among the mammals the lion, rhinoceros, mammoth elephant, hippopotamus, and the African wild-cat, all in the ages when the land, now under sea, was a plateau, and mammoth creatures roved across from Africa. When the hot climate became a cold one, bears found their way here. In the damp climate of Mousterian times the land that is now the foreshore of the Baousse-Rousse was a marshy swamp with rank vegetation, "where cave-dwellers split the elephant bones and quarrelled over the marrow". We know that they cooked by fire ; I have always wondered how it was that before ever man made tools he knew how to use fire. They had chosen a magnificent site for their dwelling-place, from the red cliffs they could look out far over the Bay of Garavan by land and by sea,



and the Adam of that age lived no solitary existence but in a cave community, as the nine caverns testify. And his home was no hole in earth but a spacious dwelling-place, for the principal cave, the Barma Grande, is sixty feet high, like a lofty assembly hall.

In those days when the land was all marsh and mists, Neanderthal man, brutish, low-grade compared with the older Chellean race in Europe, cowered in these caves. It is often said that the Neanderthal man died out, but have we not sometimes seen his lineal descendant in the low brows, heavy occipital ridges, jutting mouths, receding chins, short necks, long swinging arms, bow legs, and shambling gait, of certain people among us today? About fifty thousand years ago, in a cave of the Baousse-Rousse, men of the mists fashioned the statue of a Neanderthal woman, and she did not conform to the Greek idea of beauty. But she has given us vital knowledge; we can tell what a ~~woman~~ woman looked like who belonged to the last race of the Lower Paleolithic Age.

The greatest discovery of the Baousse-Rousse however was that of the race, up till then unknown in Europe, now called the Grimaldi. In these caves which are red as the ochre and peroxide of their skeletons, there lived in Aurignacian times this unknown race of negritic stock. In appearance they were rather like the Bushmen of today, and with negroid attributes. They show nothing of the brutish characteristics of Neanderthal man. The same features have been found in graves late as Neolithic times in Mébihan, Brittany, and also in Switzerland. And the type Grimaldi persists in Europe today. Though they lived alongside Crô-Magnon man, they came to Europe much earlier than that roaming race of hunters and artists. From these later Aurignacian people,

the Crô-Magnons, descend most of the population of South and Central America and many peoples now in Africa such as the Berbers. With their well-proportioned, finely evolved cranium, disharmonic like the Basques, their tall stature and finely proportioned bodies, they had little in common with the physical characteristics of the Grimaldi men.

In the Barma Grande cave, lying 28 feet below the surface, in a trench of red ochre, were found the skeletons of a Crô-Magnon chief, a youth, and a girl, and they gave proof that man buried his dead even in early quaternary times. The remains of the children were found in the Barma Grande with their faces turned left to the warrior chief. The chief was found with a necklace of red deer teeth and a crown of strung salmon vertebrae, his skull covered with red peroxide.

But the most interesting discovery in all the nine caves was that of the clinging negroids, whose skeletons I had seen in the Prehistoric Museum at Monaco. These are the remains which brought to light the existence of that negroid race in Europe which we call Grimaldi. The skeletons are those of a youth lying on his side with an old woman on the top of him. A pebble was in the old woman's mouth, and what strange rite placed it there, what it symbolised, may remain unknown for ever. Most of us must have experienced a sense of frustration in our inability to read these riddles of the past. We cross the threshold of another age when we enter the caves of our ancestors, and when we leave their darkness for the light of our own day, we leave them with their secrets guarded.

I went by bus from Grimaldi to San Remo through Ventimiglia off the Roja, the river that flows down from the mountains to the sea. At this time Venti-

miglia and all the hillside frontier villages were bristling with Italian troops. There was much more show of activity on the Italian than on the French side of the frontier. Our newspapers were inspected along with our baggage, and one of us was unlucky. He was an Italian found with a copy of *L'Humanité*, the French communist paper. He was taken to the frontier police station, and he did not rejoin our bus when it started off again. We drove on past the baked hills of Liguria, along one of the great roads which ran out in Roman times from Genoa, the route on which so many civilisations had met.

San Remo is a Roman-founded city. It won fame in 1584 through one of its sailors who was present in Rome when the obelisk from Heliopolis was about to be set up in front of St. Peter's. Pope Sixtus V had enjoined silence during the ceremony, anyone who broke it would be punished by death. But all did not go according to plan. There was a dangerous hitch in hauling the great monument into position. Out from the crowd rang a voice in the dialect of Liguria, *Aiga a e corde!*, "water on the ropes!" The advice was taken, the water made the ropes contract, and the huge column rose safely into position. Instead of punishing him with death, the Pope asked this San Remo sailor, Bresca, what he would like as a reward. Bresca requested that his native town might supply the palms sent yearly to St. Peter's. That is why the palm-leaves in San Remo are tied up on the trees, to bleach them for Palm Sunday. This custom of Palm bearing and decorating is one of the most ancient in the Church; palms are used in the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles as they were in the Feast of Osiris in ancient Egypt.

San Remo with mandarin oranges, pomegranates,

blue borage, white and purple alyssum, the glaucous leaves of the lotus, the carouba, and the sea-cineraria, the old mills for crushing the fruit near streams, houses all inellow browns and yellows in the Old Town, was a place for those who love to splash on their colours in fine big sweeps. Except at Antibes I have never seen the Mediterranean bluer than it looked on my first day in San Remo. This tideless sea is blue because of its saltness (it is saltier than the North Sea) and also because of its clearness. It is clear because its warmth ensures that particles sink quickly ; the finer the particles which remain, the bluer does the reflected light appear.

There are few things you will remember with more pleasure on the Riviera than the Madonna della Costa on the heights above the Citta Vecchia, the Old Town. Here up the long steep street you walked under the arches which crossed it as earthquake-resisters, from house to house. The steepness of all these Riviera towns made them the best defence against Algerian pirates, and that is why the houses are piled up on each other. Those vaulted ways in the Old Town of San Remo were dark indeed, and the buildings had little window space. Yet the houses teemed with life inside, life restless, crowded, often hopeless. Up the cobbled street donkeys passed, panniers laden with flagons of the sweet wine Chiavari, for which San Remo is noted. I turned into a little *popolari* restaurant in the Old Town, and had a wondrous supper of *Moscordini Triglie*, which is a frittura of rockfish (*rascasso*), red tunny, blanquette, *calamaretti* ("octopus"), cuttle-fish and other sea fry. Mullet is speared by night with the aid of pine torches ; the fish attracted by the light, give a leap, and the spear does the rest.

From the paved slope in front of the lovely domed church of the Maria della Costa with a horseshoe of mountains behind her, you could see Corsica on a clear day. In the evening light I saw on the steely blue sea the brown sails of a *tartane*, and by contrast, the white hulk of a cruiser. "Santuario della Madonna della Costa : si abbraccia con lo aguardo tutta la collina e la vecchia citta nonché la San Remo moderna, stendentesi come un solo giardino lungo la marina da Capo Verde a Capo Nero." And through my head ran the air of the hymn tenderly familiar to Catholics the world over, *Hail Queen-eeen of Heaven, the o-o-cean Star!* Madonna della Costa, Our Lady of the coast, "Mother of Christ, Star of the Sea, Pray for the wanderer, pray for me".

I went by train from San Remo to Alassio, passing Porto Maurizio heaped up with yellow-brown houses, with its white-domed church crowning the hill. Alassio was in 1938 a German town on the Italian Riviera. For long it had been overrun with the Northern Barbarians, suffering from the superiority-complex of a people young in nationhood, loud-voiced, big-limbed, and down on the shore which has the whitest sands on the Ligurian coast, they were grabbing at the fruit which native sailors brought round in baskets to the bathers. Behind them stretched the sea walls, sturdy defences built by Algerian corsairs who thus helped the Alassians to keep out the Turks.

The fishermen here are the oldest on the Ligurian coast; they have been coral fishers in their time, but now their chief catches were sardines and anchovies. Two of them were cooking their own bouillabaisse in a black kettle, on the shore, and invited me to share it. All the natural history of the Mediterranean

seemed to be in it and, with its flavouring of bay leaf, saffron and garlic, its crayfish and small fry, its oil, bread, potatoes and onions, it was even better than the one I had enjoyed at the Réserve in Villefranche, and that restaurant had the reputation for producing the best of all bouillabaisse. The men showed me their buoys for marking drift nets; they were made of a large piece of cork in which palm branches were fixed. And I saw split bamboo poles, with which they probed the sea urchins, forcing them into the cleft, a method that was as old no doubt as the days when the Phoenicians trading British tin and Baltic amber sailed by San Remo.

Alassio is a town of fruit and flowers, with its oranges and medlars, its blossom of almond and cherry, and here the carouba flourishes more extravagantly than anywhere on the Riviera; the Alassians feed their horses and mules on it. Olives are more at home here on the eastern Riviera, because these shores are less exposed to the mistral. On the side-walk of the main street you could see the Mediterranean shining blue through archways, and in the street itself you would meet horses with sunbonnets of yellow silk and feathers. This main street used to be called 'the drain' by the English colony. But I found that name better applied to the chapel of Santa Croce, the most malodorous place I have ever known. From Santa Croce you could see Albenga to the east and look out seawards to the island of Gallinaria, which from its shape is called after the Latin word for a hen. There is a story that St. Honorat banished the snakes of Lérins to Gallinaria, but if he did they must have arrived here dead, for they were corpses before he had finished with them on Lérins.

Coming back to Alassio I heard on the hillside a man

calling "Arri" to his donkey; it brought back poignantly the "Arre 'burro" of the ass-drivers in Córdoba, on a day in 1936 very near to the start of the war in Spain. Are "Arri" and "Arre" cognate with "Allez" I wonder? In the coastal dialects which are numerous, the 'l' of standard Italian frequently becomes 'r', and this tendency may be a survival of the old Ligurian speech. We know for instance, that the word for 'golfe', Italian gulf, is, in the ancient Ligurian tongue, 'gour'.

In the darkness that was to descend on Europe, the memory of sunny towns like Alassio would gleam as a torch in the blackness of a cavern.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE CAMARGUE

THE lagoon lay like a sheet of silver in the moonlight as our train flashed past the vast inland salt lake of the Étang de Berre, near Marseilles. It is a perfect natural harbour, seven times the size of Toulon, safe and sheltered, and it was strange that as late as 1938 it had never been used as a harbour. On these lagoons round the delta of the Rhone the *utriculares*, guilds of boatmen, in their boats of stretched skins, carried merchandise for their Roman masters. Inland transport in those days went by the Via Aurelia which ran out from Rome by Pisa, Genoa, Alasio, San Remo, Mentone, La Turbie, Cannes, Fréjus and Aix, then passed the Étang de Berre, turned north and crossed the stony plain of Crau. It ran thence, in its old Provencal name of the Camin Aoureliau, to the great Roman camp at Arles, where it became the Domitian Way, leading into Spain. The plain of Crau, crossed by this Via Aurelia, is strewn with boulders which have come down from the Alps; the pebbles of the Great Crau are formed of the white quartz that has been washed down in diluvial ages from the Alps where the Rhone rises. The glacial wind, north-west *bise*, sweeps over this plain in winter and the pebbles are blown like the shifting sands of a desert.

I had left Marseilles for Arles after midnight. The full moon floodlit the marshes and lagoons and turned



the olives into silver lace. An editor of a Marseilles paper shared the carriage as far as Arles, and inevitably our talk turned on politics. The Anglo-French alliance was about to be strengthened by the visit to Paris of the King and Queen of England. "Doesn't it amuse you, this forced marriage of Marianne to John Bull" I said. "Ah, but how necessary" he said, "emphatically a necessity. Better for Marianne to be the wife of John Bull than the slave of Adolf Hitler". The man was a royalist himself, but his sentiments about the Franco-Britannic alliance of 1938 were also those of the French communists, whose paper declared: "L'entente franco-britannique est une nécessité française, mais c'est aussi une nécessité britannique. Nous faisons grief aux dirigeants de notre diplomatie de l'avoir trop fréquemment oublié."

"Only one French statesman really ever understood German psychology, and that was Poincaré. If he had had his way, Germany would have been back where she was in 1869, a Confederation of States", said my travelling companion.

"But divide et impera would never have been true for any Germany so treated, after Bismarck" I objected. "Her national direction is too strong".

"The biggest mistake the English have made," replied the man from Marseilles, "was to encourage Germany after 1920, when the English began to fear French hegemony in Europe. Without the British loan, Germany could not have rearmed to become a military menace to all Europe. Britain has often indulged in the curious practice of arming her obvious enemies. You remain indeed, the most illogical people on earth".

"The will to union among all the German people of the Reich is among the most constant factors in

German life" I answered. "If Britain had granted no loan, this desire for a unified Germany would have been strong enough to ensure that unification. You find that desire as strong among persecuted German refugees, as among the Nazis. And any reversion to Poincaré's idea would only mean more Hitlers."

It was nearly 2.0 a.m. when I got to Arles. For its small size, Arles is the easiest city in which to lose oneself. I was glad I already knew my way about the town. There was the long walk to the hotel in the Place du Forum where I got a bed, only to leave it at 4.0 a.m. as it was too damp to sleep in. No one came in reply to my rings, so I had to search for another room myself, and risk walking into an occupied one. Eventually I found an empty room, only to be roused soon after by some arrivals off an early morning train. Contact with damp sheets in the first room was a reminder that 'Arles', which derives from the Celtic 'Ar-lath', means "the moist habitation".

Arles has always been a city of ceremonies, from the days of the Roman festivals in the Arena. There was a pagan touch no less about some of the Arlesian celebrations in the Middle Ages, the Feast of Pentecost for instance, when naked girls ran races and the city magistrates gave the prizes which were publicly subscribed. The bull-fights at Arles which up to the outbreak of war in 1939 still took place in the ancient Arena, had no connection with those of Spain. Competitors had to test their skill by plucking rosettes, from between the horns of the bull. The contests of strength from which the bull-fights of the Camargue originated, and the sport called "à la cocarde" was carried on at Arles, Nîmes, and in the villages of Lower Provence, where within a rustic arena formed of wagons, the youths in chase pulled down the bull

to tear from him a cockade fixed between his two horns. Millin recalls in connection with these Arlesian sports, the *Taurocapsies* of Thessaly, and compares the *ferrado* to Théajène's contest with a bull as recounted by Heliodorus. This custom of *la ferrado* was very ancient. A young bull was driven by the *gardians* to the place where the *ferrado* was to be held; he was seized by the horns, thrown down, kept on his side, and muzzled with a small flat board designed to prevent him raising his head.

The *gardians*, horsemen fearless as the *csikós* of the Hungarian plain, had formed a fraternity since 1513, and they met together in the cathedral of Arles; their patron was St. George. They had kept up also the games of the tournament times of the Middle Ages, such as running in the ring, and a handkerchief game which curiously is found at the other side of the Mediterranean among the camel drivers Touareg du Hoggar.

When I left Arles to drive over the Camargue to Les Saintes-Maries de la Mer, I had been once before to this region, and had read that great Provencal poem *Mireio*. But when Mistral wrote *Mireio* he had never seen Les Saintes-Maries or the Petit-Rhône; he went there for the first time in 1855 when the Camargue was a land hardly known, the paradise of poachers and fishermen. Only seven feet above sea-level, it was, likened by Stendhal, one of its early explorers in 1838, to Dutch Zeeland. I did not find it so, just a century later in 1938. The whole character of the Camargue is different from the Dutch countryside. The Camargue terrain is the result of alluvial deposits brought down by the Rhone, and by the outpouring in early times of Alpine lakes; its lagoons and pools are like oases in this desert land. The

*Camargo* whose name derives from the Old Provencal word 'Comarco', a region, is strictly that island plain between the Grand Rhône in the east and the Petit Rhône in the west. It forms an equilateral triangle with Trinquetille near Arles as the apex, and a thirty-mile stretch of coast as its base.

A region of savage beauty, it is one in which man has always seemed to recede before the forces of nature. The sea has won over the land that was once a country of forests of oaks and pines used in making the Arlesian boats, which plied up and down the Rhone with the commerce between the interior and the Lion Gulf. The Rhone was the link between the Mediterranean culture and the north, and in the Middle Ages it was one of the great travel routes of the west. In its headlong rush in flood it has been likened to a bull who has seen red. One of the few things which man has not been able to tame, this sweeping and majestic river has passed in its course many civilisations, and there are some days now when, after such a long history, its flow seems old and tired. The river's changing course throughout the centuries has necessitated different watch-towers being built from time to time. Even since Mistral wrote *Mireio*, the region of the delta has changed, for the arms of the Rhone are continually encroaching on the Camargue, while on the south-east the land is losing to the sea. There are islands in the delta with names that go back to days before even the Phœnicians found their way here; one such is *Tey*, which is of Ligurian origin, the word being cognate with *Tes*, or *Tas*, as in *entassement*, the name for the low grass-covered sandbanks from which these islands are formed.

As I had only one day to spend in the country before leaving Arles for Paris, I hired a car, and left

with the driver for Les Saintes-Maries and Aigues-Mortes across a country that was Saharan without the palm. And over this shadeless land where the air ripples in the scorching sun we drove through the *Camargo*. Past giant poplars, tamarisk, and wild vines with their sturdy branches, we came to a stretch of samphire, horse-tailed grass, and then the great waste of *sansouire* with its strong bitter herbage of the coast. Nothing grows here but salt vegetation, owing to the infiltration of the sea, only tufts of rust-coloured reedy grasses and hummocks of green on the dun sands. At the mouth of the delta near the ancient port of Silva, the nights are sweet with the scent of mint, herbs, and a rosemary on the sand dunes, but nothing can tame this wild land. I do not know a region in Europe more fascinating than this savage country of the Camargue; in autumn when the skies look green and gamboge at sunset, land and sky blend in a strange colour scheme. There is more colour in the Camargue in spring, with silver asters, blue and yellow flowers of samphire, and the rose-pink feathery flowers of the tamarisk which is a colour compensation for the vast stretch of the dun plain. But by summer the fierce sun has paled the flowers and blanched those reeds from which the natives made baskets. It is a hard life for the scattered farmers and the *gardians*,<sup>1</sup> almost the only dwellers on this salt prairie that has the harsh dry summers, the icy mistral, and the long rains of winter.

My driver knew one of the *gardians*, and pointed out his *cabane*. This was a lonely hut in the midst of the salt desert, the only "house" that could be seen for miles, and yet a salt-white road ran out to it

<sup>1</sup> Horsemen who drive the savage black cattle.

from the main one. Like the other *cabanes* of the Camargue this one was lime-washed, and its roof, deeper than the house wall, was thatched with layers of marsh reed plastered over with mud. Along the ridge ran the stout beam with a crooked cross sloping backwards, as they do in these parts. Sometimes bull-horns will be seen on these beams. We drove up to the *cabane* and knocked on the door. There was no answer, so the driver looked through the window. I couldn't desist from doing the same. I might never again see a *cabane*, and I longed to know what it looked like inside. I saw first of all the wooden rafters with the thatch visible from the inside. From the roof hung some smoked meats, and along the white-washed wall the *gardian's* trident was placed. There was a picture of Provencal horsemen, and before the open chimney were two wooden chairs, and a stock-whip lay on a table. There was very little else in the room.

I was sorry not to see the owner. The emptiness of that cabin seemed in keeping with the desolation all around it. Far off roamed the great black cattle which the *gardian* would lasso from his white mare and drive with his trident-pole calling 'Hau!' Fierce black bulls some of them, others old participants of the ring, gashed and blinded by the tridents. Often there are as many as three hundred in a herd or *manade*; I saw some of them later eating the tiny branches of the tamarisk. In July the fushes flower, and the bulls eat their grain and flowers, also the branchy plant called samphire whose leaves have a pleasant flavour, and "le triangle", a rush-plant which the cattle favour when green; even when dry they prefer this to the reeds, but the mares like best of all the dry reeds. One thing that both bulls and

mares avoid is the prickly thistle, whose Provençal name is *quruelo*. When autumn comes the reapers would cut the reeds and they would pluck the vine, and this work, which was almost a festival, would be shared in by all the dwellers of the Camargue, the fishers of the salt lagoons, the workers on the *mas* or Provençal farms, and the *gardians* of the bulls. The right of cutting reeds, *segado*, recalled turbary rights in Ireland. Various such survivals and in some cases revivals, could still be found in Provence. One such revival was that of *mátegado*, the right to catch fish which were stupefied with the cold, a right which though communal, had been done away with at the French Revolution in 1793.

We left the lonely *cabane*, and drove on past a farm as lonely, but so large and prosperous-looking as to be a strange contrast to the *gardian's* hut. This homestead was a Provençal *mas*, substantial, self-contained, a seven-window-fronted house with three storeys, red-roofed. The word *mas* comes from Latin *mansu*, 'habitation', hence 'mansion'. Such dwellings were nearly always vine-covered, and in front of the house you would often see a solitary tamarisk. Life on a *mas* was self-contained, as indeed it must be when your nearest neighbour might be six miles away. When the howling winds tore round these lonely farms you could imagine that the *masques*, evil spirits of Provence, were in that tearing mistral. There are many things in Provençal paganism, as for instance the familiarity with the devil, the jests at his expense, that are like those the Irish sometimes make.

We drove on over this treeless land that was perpetually exposed to the elements, wind and sea, and that had no material for building; the Provençal

prairie over which swept an icy wind from the Alps, mistral, the 'magistral' or master wind. Nor was there any dairying on this sparse land; it was goats who gave the milk, and goats who led the sheep in May to seek the pasturages of the Cevennes. But African sheep, whose standard of living is lower than French ones, were often brought over, and could grass where others would starve. Only after we had driven many miles did we see an occasional plane-tree and some burdocks, we saw too, conical salt-heaps, and wells which reminded me of those on the Hungarian plain, with a horizontal pole running through a forked stick, and a bucket suspended from a chain at one end of the pole, a survival of the old pastoral life of plainsmen the world over. I have never missed mountains, myself, having always preferred plains. But the driver from Arles told me that he had never seen a mountain, and that he longed to. We continued our drive over land which for all its scanty vegetation was a paradise for hunters, with ibex, hares, pheasants, bustards and partridges. Here and there from an occasional willow we saw long pendulous nests, lined with the down of the tamarisk flower; the Camargue region is a great breeding place for birds. Above all for the flamingoes whose raucous cries can be heard far over the marshlands; when they are surprised they rise in flight spreading their wings fanwise first, then all move to one side and swing off in file, beating their way across the sky, in triangular formation.

This sudden flash of scarlet over the dun and salt-white earth is just one of the surprises that you find in this strange land; paradoxically this country, so scanty of vegetation, teems with wild life, and the unexpected is always happening in this land of salty wastes. Nothing is more surprising than the sudden



flashes of colour beneath the pale skies and over the dun earth of the Camargue ; the scarlet of flamingoes, the yellow of marguerites (which the natives call *fleur d'amour*, the blue and green of kingfishers, the coral of the legs of waterhens, and the blue that marks the heads of teal. The still air may suddenly be pierced with the cry of curlews, or the calm of the salt lagoons may be broken by a flight of wild duck and widgeon.

As we approached the delta of the Rhone, the land became a vast salt prairie with stunted grasses and saltwort, and I picked out one solitary umbrella pine. In some places, as round the Étang de Vacarés for instance, a mirage is sometimes seen ; water appears on the horizon, belts of vegetation, then sand. But in reality there is nothing but sand. These *étangs* look like craters in the moon, weird as the white salty land beyond them with its dunes, sandbars, canals, and mosquito marshes. This mirage of the salt wastes brings visions of another land, of shining cities and glittering lakes, the Camargue, like Connemara, is a land of fey. In Iar-Connacht we can enter a Brobdiagnagian world in which figures appear out of their accustomed proportions ; a man becomes a giant or rises up before us suddenly as some fantastic figure. The known world merges into the world of legend, of faery, and though you are taken by surprise with some figure out of the Fenian age, yet the gigantesque, the droll, never surprises you in Connemara ; you take it as a matter of course. In one other region in Europe I have seen the known merge into the little known, in that strange savage country of the Danube delta where in that reedy wilderness on the shores of the Black Sea round Valkov, I have, like other travellers, seen a mirage.

Your first sight of the fortress church of Les-Saintes-

Maries-de-la-Mer rising up from the plain of the Camargue will be unforgettable. Far off it was like a ship, its wide bell-turrets sails, and there was the mirage of the sea to heighten illusion, the town being surrounded by a white band of salty soil which in the distance suggests the sea. That church was built of the stones which were carried down to Beaucaire by the immense floods of the Rhone in ancient times. Remains have been found here which have given clues to the civilisations of peoples more ancient than the Ionians who made a settlement in the Camargue. Traces have been found of the Merovingian houses, but Merovech "The Sea-Born" no more than Canute, could turn the sea from its course, and the houses of the Frankish noblemen were swallowed up by the sea.

The driver pulled up by the church of Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, "capital" of the Camargue. A town as dead as Aigues-Mortes for most of the year. But on the 25th of May it was another story. For then the gipsies had their annual pilgrimage, and they came from all over France for their Feast Day when the sea and the gipsies were blessed by the Archbishop of Aix. Ste. Sara, unofficially canonised by the Romanies as their patron saint, came out of Egypt they say, as servant to Marie Salomé and Marie Jacobé, the aunts of Christ who came to Provence. And the three of them landed from their frail boat at Les-Saintes-Maries. High up in the tower of the strange church with the fortress front was the shrine of Ste. Marie Jacobé; M. le Curé in long belted coat and flat shoes, custodian of the tower, extremely annoyed at first at being asked to show us round, beamed at us over his spectacles by the time we reached the relics of Ste. Marie Jacobé. From what

he said later I gathered that he had been climbing up and down the tower all morning, and had had a little too much of the everlasting English.

Down in the crypt of Ste. Sara, patron saint of the gipsies, hung the rags of those who had been cured through, or received favours from, the dark servant of the two Maries. The floor was covered with tallow from the votive candles, and high above the altar was a window through which on the Feast Day of Les-Saintes-Maries, the coffin of Saint Sara decked with plumes was lowered for the veneration of the gipsies, who thereupon started a scramble to see who could touch the relics first. The church then was a crush of colour with the crimson, emerald, and orange shawls of the swarthy devotees of Saint Sara. There seemed to be something pagan in the ritual of that service, when, from the blaze of candles and from the dark shadows of the crypt, to the cry "Vivent les Saintes Maries" came a shout "Et la Sainte Sara !" And then the gipsies would go singing down to the sea, with the images of the Saintes Maries in a boat. And down went the *gardians* of the plain too, riding like kings of the Camargue on white horses, in their striped coloured shirts, black jackets, white trousers and wide-brimmed hats, and they raised their bull trident-poles and their banners in salute to the images in the sea.

It was an affaire du peuple entirely, and the gipsies had taken it all into their own hands ; singing and skipping they followed their dusky saint into the water, along with their king, Emanuel, who himself was a man of Les-Saintes-Maries. And that town, by the way, in spite of its saints, went communist in 1937. Yet not such a strange place for this to happen in after all, seeing it is near to Marseilles.

"Did they stay communist long?" I asked the driver from Arles.

He swore frightfully. "They did not then, they were soon cured of communism. It was all the work of those men from Marseilles, they brought a curse on Stes-Maries, the people were worse off than ever before. And though I don't like le Curé, I like less those communists—Pff!"

Down on the wild shore where plain and sea meet, a lateen-rigged trawler was the only sign of life on that wide tideless sea. For the last time I saw the triangular bell-turret of the church of Stes. Maries, the church in which the people of the plain had sought shelter from the Saracens, the church which had been put to other uses in the French Revolution, and against which the communists of the Camargue had raised clenched fists in 1937. Communism then seemed about as exotic to the Camargue as was Calvinism to La Napoule, that joyous little place along the coast, where the romanticist Wilde, and the realist de Maupassant, wrote things which would hardly have passed a Calvinist censor.

"And now for Aigues-Mortes" said my driver.

Out of the great plain where it had stood for seven hundred years, we saw the lonely Tour St. Louis, rising like a top-heavy Spanish galleon. In the time of St. Louis, Aigues-Mortes was accessible by road from one side only, so this tower was built to defend that approach to the city. Wars of religion had battered that great block rising out of the flat lands to the north of Aigues-Mortes. There was no more compact city in Europe, everything that was Aigues-Mortes was enclosed within four rectangular walls. Those thirteenth-century ramparts were built as much against the sands as to resist the invasions of

men, and they constituted the most perfect type of military architecture of the thirteenth century. They had a much greater degree of unity than the superimposed structures of Carcassonne.

Though the starting place of the crusaders under St. Louis, Aigues-Mortes was not on the sea. The French king had a canal cut from the Tour de Constance and his boats sailed by this through the lagoons to the port of Grau du Roi. Extremes of climate meet here, fierce sun and fever in the summer, and the icy grip of the mistral in the early spring. Owing to the channels filling with sand and to the creation of the port of Cette, Aigues-Mortes declined until by the sixteenth century it had disappeared altogether as a Mediterranean port. I walked round the city's ramparts and its fifteen towers and saw below me the deserts and marsh of the Camargue, a strange world of dunes, sea, and desolate lagoons. Descending by the Tower of Constance, the only part of the fortifications remaining from the time of St. Louis, I thought what a splendid sight this must have been when it was used as a lighthouse, and far over the marshes and out to sea a bright flame would burn as a beacon. But it had dark stories to tell within. That dungeon once imprisoned sixteen Huguenot women. One of them was released after forty-two years of underground darkness, her only crime having been that as a child of six, she had been taken to a Protestant service by her grandmother.

The town itself was clearly a crusader's town in its lay-out; the streets crossed each other at right angles, and the fortifications were the same as those which the crusaders raised in the Holy Land. In the Place de St. Louis the statue of the crusading king, cross on breast, sword in hand, recalled his embarkation

for the Holy Land ; his statue faced the church of Notre-Dame de Sablons which also had a picture of St. Louis leaving Aigues-Mortes for the east. It is not for St. Louis however that I shall remember Aigues-Mortes. It is for the puling patchy cats, and for the revolting dogs which came to scratch themselves round my table when I was lunching outside an inn by the Porte de la Gardette. Anything more unpleasant as an accompaniment to a meal than those itchy scavengers I have never found.

He would drive me to St. Gilles, he said. Only ten more francs. It was tempting and I said yes, so we headed north-west, leaving the Petit Rhône on our right, and for the first time that day my driver and I were no longer actually in the Camargue. Suddenly I heard the neighing of horses, and a herd of white mares came by at a gallop, kicking up a cloud of dust. "The mosquitoes are after them", said the driver; "they are tormented with bites in the evening and then they get together, lashing their tails at the flies; you should see them!"

We came to the Roman church at St. Gilles with its great triple doorway, about which whole books have been written, so I will do no more than say that the sculpture of the Passion of Our Lord on the west front was most remarkable both for its realism, and for its freedom from the conventionality of its period. There was life in that old stone. St. Giles, after whom the town was called, was of noble Athenian birth, and lived for years in a forest at Nîmes, his sole companion a hind. After his death in the seventh century his cult spread far beyond Provence; St. Gilles became a notable place of pilgrimage and many a crusading party started from here in the thirteenth century. This town is connected with Aigues-Mortes and also with Montpel-

lier by many tributaries of the Rhone, and up and down these channels passed the boats of the pilgrim parties.

"I will take you to have supper with some friends of mine" said my driver, "you will be absolutely à la Camargue, it will be simple, but I assure you that it will be good, and it will be the meal of a *gardian*." And so it was that I shared in the town of St. Gilles the supper of an elderly baker and his wife, a dish of fried artichokes, peppers, onions and garlic, a rough cheese and some sour red wine. And a better supper I never had. It was, indeed, the best thing about St. Gilles I remember, except for the church porch. For if Aigues-Mortes was dead, St. Gilles was decaying, and a town in decay is worse than one which has reached the last stage. Remembering its history, plundered and pillaged by Saracens and by rival lords of Provence, shuttle-cocked between Catholics and Huguenots, I wondered what there could have been worth fighting for in this town where its citizens as well as its streets had long succumbed to a dead-rot.

Late that night I left St. Gilles for Dijon. Next to me in the train sat a middle-aged Englishman. He was small, with dusty-looking hair and a face lined with worries. Within a loose book-cover inscribed "The A.B.C. of Stellar Physics", he was reading a salacious history of the Female Popes. I felt sorry for that little man and would like to have talked to him, but we parted at Dijon. This was still a French stronghold, still stamped as a Burgundian city, where they drank red wine from giant goblets. Dijon, the centre of French tourism, Dijon guardian of Franche-Comté—how many of us on that day, July 18th, 1938, could have foreseen that on July 18th, 1940, we should be staring at the headlines, "The Germans have entered Dijon"?

## CHAPTER XII

### "VIVE LA FRANCE!"

THE King and Queen of England had just stepped from the royal train at the Gare du Boulogne when I reached Paris on the morning of July 19th, 1938. And from that morning the country which had got rid of its own royalty, engaged itself in celebrating most heartily the extraordinary marriage of John Bull to Marianne. Until I got to Paris I had looked upon that union as a *mariage de convenance*; it had certainly been that in its earlier stages, but by July it had become almost a union of hearts. No one but Germany could have produced that phenomenon, and the alliance was destined to have breaks and renewals, indeed to suffer all the vicissitudes that might be expected of partners temperamentally opposed. France having got rid of her own kings and queens, had given herself over to junketing for the royalty of Britain only five days after the Republic had been celebrating the fall of the Bastille. But then I have always maintained that France, save on its Mediterranean shores, at heart is royalist. It was though, something of a strain on the republicanism of its citizens to be told that Mme. Le Brun, the wife of the President, performed "*une impeccable révérence*" to Queen Elizabeth, and M. Le Brun for the length of his handshake with King George did not escape the censure of outraged communists. The communist press however, was certainly not behind



the rest in rejoicing over the royal visit ; *L'Humanité* gave half its main news page to the event and said, "The communists whole-heartedly rejoice at this manifestation of the Anglo-French entente", and M. Léon Brum, ex-President and socialist leader, wrote in *Le Populaire* "The Republican people of Paris welcome today the sovereigns of the mightiest Empire in the world. They will receive them with every mark of joy". And so the Parisians and the English crowds danced together that night in the Avenue de l'Opéra, celebrating the nuptials of a union which was to be so tragically broken two years later.

Anticipating this demonstration of solidarity in July 1938, Hitler had despatched his A.D.C. Captain Wiedemann, to the British Foreign Minister, with a message of goodwill to the British Government, and an expression of belief that Germany and Britain could be on the best of terms, and that the Czecho-Slovakian question could be settled peacefully. "Beware the poisoned olive branch" I wrote to a friend in the British Foreign Office. Two months later Adolf Hitler presented his ultimatum to Czecho-Slovakia, and the Prime Minister of Britain to avert immediate war gave his signature to the Munich Agreement. The words of Le Bon, written in 1917, might have been a timely warning : "Tant que les conceptions militaires de l'Allemagne n'auront pas été transformés, les peuples obtiendront des armistices, mais non une paix durable".

I watched the workmen across the Seine finishing the decorations on the Quai d'Orsay from which King George and Queen Elizabeth were to go by launch up the river to the Hôtel de Ville ; Parisians had smiled when on their Republican Fête Day of July 14th they had seen the emblems of British royalty already

displayed with the decorations commemorating the Fall of the Bastille. There was nothing like being ready in time. One English paper had said with unconscious humour that the celebrations of July 14th would be “ especially brilliant this year as they have been linked with the festivities in honour of the Royal visit ”. At any rate, five days before their arrival in the French capital, Paris in the words of the communist *L'Humanité* was waiting with “ une fébrile impatience ” the advent of the British sovereigns. So when the Paris crowds danced at night in the Place de l'Opéra, they did so under illuminations which flashed in rainbow colours the letters “ G.VI ” and “ E ”.

I went round with the crowds and saw the start of the royal procession from the Quai d'Orsay to the Gala Dinner at the Elysée. Only the French could have made such a beautiful stage-setting of the Rond-Pont of the Champs Elysées with its flags draped so gracefully from their silvery standards. No formal grandiosity, but French sense of décor. Curvetting and cavorting, the mounts of the Spahis, France's African armies, crossed the Pont Alexandre III, and down the Faubourg St. Honoré came the Mounted Republican Guards, gendarmes, infantry troops, then a flutter of pigeons when these were released as part of the pageantry of procession. There was no French frugality about that dinner to the British sovereigns at the Palais d'Elysée or at the lunch at Versailles. We learnt all about the trout from Lake Annecy with red crayfish sauce and the noisette of lamb stuffed with quail and the cold wing of duck and the breast of chicken and the Périgord truffles and the pineapple ice pudding and the Montreuil peaches.

Late that evening I went up to Montmartre, the real Montmartre that was round the Place du Tertre

and not in the Rue Pigale. From the wide steps of the Sacré-Cœur, I looked up to the basilica, moon-white, and then down on the city below, strangely dark on this night of festivity, for there was no one at home to show houselights. Everyone was out in the city. I got into a taxi in an effort to get back to my hotel; it was 3.0 a.m. In the Libre Commune of Montmartre, anarchist in tradition, the good-natured crowds were shouting "Vive le Roi!" "Et la Reine aussi" called one jovial fellow, thrusting his head inside my taxi. It was enough to be English that night, to be fêted and fussed. This popularity was destined to be short-lived, but those who experienced it will not forget it. And all night up in Montmartre, they, sober Parisians, talked to lift the heart of a stranger, for I am still carried away by the rhythm of the French language, just as I was when I first heard such English lines as "Carry a palm in Santa Chiara, Carry a palm for me."

The next morning I was breakfasting at the Hôtel Terminus opposite the Gare du Nord. A crowd had already gathered outside, waiting for the British Busbies. When the soldiers swung into sight, the crowd rushed to meet them, hailed them hilariously, and, like La Vivandière, Marianne to a woman fell in behind with a tow-row, row-row, row-row, the British Grenadiers. It almost seemed as if those resolute-looking Parisians were determined that the busbies should save them from the Germans. There was irony in the fact that France's Independence Day, July 14th, had just been celebrated. How long would her independence last? On the day of her national festival, *L'Eclaireur* said: "Jamais, depuis les heures angoissantes de juillet 1914, une telle menace n'a pesé sur la France, sur le monde".

Germany's most intensive work on the Siegfried Line had just begun. And two years later she was to break through France's Maginot Line. Two years later France was to celebrate her Day of Independence as a Day of Mourning. The 151st anniversary of the Fall of the Bastille saw France a nation in which Liberté, Egalité and Fraternité had been exchanged for Bondage, Slavery and Oppression. France a fief of Germany, France's Republican Constitution discarded, and Hitler's puppet French Government established under Marshal Pétain.

But one day the *Marseillaise* was to crash out anew, to be taken up by men and women in whom the spirit of freedom had never died, and who were to shout with a new meaning “ Vive la France ! ”

## CHAPTER XIII

### BACK TO ENGLAND

I WAS at Plymouth when the Fleet Mobilisation Order went out on September 27th, 1938, when the war which was to come just twelve months later was expected hourly. Along the Hoe the women whose men were called to their ships, walked quietly, hardly talking to each other. Some of their men-folk were descendants of Elizabethan adventurers; in the drowsy peace of Red Devon I used to wonder how such a stuffy climate produced the Dogs of Devon. I came up to London and could have had the train to myself. Everyone was going the other way; train-loads of people were leaving London for the then safer areas in the west of England. East or west was to make little difference in a short time.

I went to Euston to see some friends off for Ireland, and started arguing with one. He was all for a World Conference to get down to economic problems. "Economics how-are-you" I said, "the question is one for psychologists, not economists. What can you do with a people so many of whom basically have slavish instincts? Numbers of them *have* heroically defied Hitlerism, but the fact remains that Nazism, besides being the logical development of Von Clausewitz and Bismarck, is also due to the inability of so many Germans through some fear-complex in their make-up, to think except as a mass-fraction." (There were a lot of people in Germany who were ready-made

helots of Hitler, because after all they know well enough what contempt their Leader had for the masses, he told them plainly enough in *Mein Kampf*.) "It's easy to blame the democracies ever since 1933," I went on, "but it would be as correct to blame the workers in dictator countries for ever letting things get to such a pass that the democracies all over the earth are now threatened with extinction. And I doubt whether the most extreme Marxists who know, like everyone else does, that a world war will bring revolutions, can really welcome the thought of world wreckage for the sake of a dictatorship of the proletariat. There will be as little left of the proletariat as there will be of bosses or bourgeois after a world conflagration. But seriously, the end of all this will be the Sovietisation of Europe, and we may all be taken over by Little Red Father."

"I agree with you there," said my Irish friend. "Take these smaller Central European States, like Slovakia and Ruthenia, which will be telescoped into each other one night, or bartered away to another Power the next; they belong to an order which has ended. In the kaleidoscopic map of Europe they are the anachronisms of an untidy and picturesque era."

I listened over the air to the rejoicings in Budapest on the night that Czecho-Slovakian Uzhorod, where I spent one of the most eventful weeks in my life, was again Hungarian Ungvar, and I heard Magyar voices hailing Munkacevo as Munkács once more. Over its dusty streets I had rattled in a bus with gold-toothed Jews and Hungarian women with green and yellow handkerchiefs binding their yellow sun-creased faces, and with Slovak women in pink and green skirts, and Ukrainian mothers in yellow jackets, carrying baskets of berries to the market, where the

flies' stormed the water-melons and stung like nettles.

I said goodbye to my friend at Euston and ran into many others there whom I knew. Through the main hall, on to the platform for the Irish Mail, trooped young men from every part of Ireland. Big brawny fellows in soft caps, with Mayo accents, workers from Britain's arms factories who were not going to get caught up in "another of England's wars."

"Look at those fellows—the dirty cowards" I heard an Englishman say. "Earn their money over here and then scuttle home when there's fighting to be done."

"And where else should they go, but home," retorted an angry Irishman, "aren't they going off to defend their own country?"

Were they? Was that the only reason why they were leaving London in 1938? Irishmen have more than average courage, but some are primitive, not of city mould, men who would lead in attack in the open, more imaginative than Englishmen and with a natural fear of being trapped. "Let me out", and they would rush with this cry in their hearts out of the inferno that would be London in wartime. Back to the wild, free spaces. Home! And raising their fare somehow or other, those Irish lads with their brawny muscle shoved their way through the crowds heavily leavened with café communists and the people who talked revolution and then bolted to Ireland with a ready instinct for a safe spot when a crisis came. For in 1938 Ireland was counted a safer place than England. Yet the Irish stage was set for such high tragedy as the eyes of a watching world had seen in Spain.

"I'm in favour of Ireland being non-belligerent."

as long' as she *can*, but as soon as she can't, she must come in with the group of Powers that will, effectively fight Nazism," I said in talk with another friend. "This time Britain's cause is Ireland's cause, and only a fool would cut off his Irish nose to spite an English face now. Britain's jackboot has been heavy enough in the past, but the Nazi one in these days is a size bigger, and if it ever sets foot on Irish soil, there won't be many left to groan under it. 'No-Surrender' set will bring a curse on the country worse than Cromwell's, by insisting on the maintenance of that ancient British Act of 1920 which keeps Ireland partitioned."<sup>1</sup>

"That's so, indeed", answered my friend. "Ireland is a key point in the world war that's coming, and nothing could be worse for Britain now, than to have a divided Ireland in conflict on Britain's Atlantic seaboard. The number of people who think the 'not-an-inch' way, is thankfully much reduced now, and the obtuseness of even the most pig-headed of the Stormont people will change. But the trouble is, it may be too late. As for Ireland's neutrality, this won't be mistaken for an expression of Irish moral opinion. Ireland's sympathies in this struggle will be with her old oppressor, John Bull; not

<sup>1</sup> On November 5th 1940, Mr. Churchill in the House of Commons, expressed regret that the harbours of Eire were no longer available for the use of British flotillas, since, by the Anglo-Irish Agreements of 1938, Britain had renounced all rights to the naval bases of Eire. Referring to Mr. Churchill's speech, and to Mr. de Valera's statement in Dáil Eireann on November 7th that "there can be no question of handing over any of these ports so long as Eire remains neutral", the Irish correspondent to *The Sunday Times* wrote on November 10th, that this attitude of Mr. de Valera was "in any case that not merely of the Government but of the people. It ought", he continued, "to have been obvious to the House of Commons that to hand back the treaty ports without having achieved a settlement of the Partition issue, accompanied by a defence agreement, was to take a serious strategic risk. A number of warnings had been given that satisfactory relations were impossible while Partition continued, at any rate in its present form."



just because the devil you know is better than the devil you don't know ; not just because today John Bull where he is in control, is a better boss than Adolf Hitler, but because Nazism is a foul, dark-minded tyranny that has got to be wiped off the earth ”.

“ I wouldn't be in such a hurry to quit ” I called to some other friends who were crossing. For I had a conviction that there would be no European war in 1938. “ If you believe in the prophecies of the Pyramids (I don't myself), you are assured that Armageddon will not arrive till after 1950. Those who repose more faith in the prophecies of Columcille will not be so comforted, because, according to the Irish saint, the Battle of the World is to take place on the Plain of Kildare. Goodbye, and may you be spared the comments of that lady with her Pekinese when she finds that she need never have withdrawn all her securities from the bank this morning and paid her first visit to Ireland.”

The “ most distressful country ” was for a little while going to be very useful to certain English people who had been accustomed to speak of Ireland as a country whose people were only happy when they were fighting. Yes, those English, and others who could not face the prodigious tempo of change, would be watching from a temporarily safer distance the disintegration of a continent that was becoming no longer safe to live in. For long many of us must have had a vision of hordes of starving humans after war, ravage, and disease, swarming over Europe in search of food. Most fortunate of all, those who would not live long enough to see the wreckage of the world.

Those who profited by the series of crises which commenced in September 1938 were the furniture

removers, the makers of moth-ball, the country house profiteers who advertised expensive bolt-holes, and the soothsayers. There was however no general panic, those who scattered voluntarily were relatively few. Compulsory evacuation came hard in many cases ; you might find your most gifted friend had been banished to Muddlecombe-in-the-Moor. Crisis had followed crisis in swift succession after Mr Chamberlain the Sky-god had soared to Adolf Hitler the War-god at Berchtesgaden ; in the popular imagination Mr. Chamberlain had been endowed with miraculous power, and in his sky-flight, by an already astrologically devoted public, he had been apotheosised as Jupiter, Father-god. But alas, the conjunction of Jupiter with Mars at that time was highly unpropitious. In the Nordic Mythland Godesberg, the War-god Adolf Hitler shook his swastika totem at the umbrella totem,<sup>1</sup> and the mantle of Jupiter fell from Neville Chamberlain, who became once more in impolite circles J'aime Berlin. This appellation had more piquancy than point, as Mr. Chamberlain's devotion to his own country was manifest. His effort to gain the necessary time for the defence of countries unready for war has been increasingly recognised since his death, morally indefensible though that Agreement of Munich was. But how small personal things seemed when, for the first time<sup>2</sup> for nearly a thousand years, England was invaded by the armadas of the air, and great battles swung through the skies. Dark skies too for the future, as the world would be ruled.

<sup>1</sup> The English have had a great respect for totems ever since Horsa, one of the Saxon founders of their race, landed with his horse-totem on the Isle of Thanet. Adroit politicians have been quick to see the value of the totem-display ; the pipe of Premier Baldwin was one of the most valuable pieces of political stage property.

<sup>2</sup> Excluding the sporadic Zeppelin raids of 1914-1918.

by the 'bomb, and children taught from the cradle to protect themselves against life. In that summer of 1940 though, the longest within our memory, the country was never more beautiful. Below the skies that drummed with the 'dactylic-trochaic rhythm of the German planes, and roared and rocked with death, the peaceful English countryside never yielded richer fruits, brighter flowers; never indeed had England shown herself so fair a land to defend:

I returned to my room in Bayswater where I lived now with divers Russians. After the Meeting of Munich I came in one evening to find Tania and Alexis sitting on the edge of the bath, looking at a burst pipe.

"Come here you Irish", called Tania. What do you think of Munich? Ireland——"

"As long as there's an Ireland there'll always be an argument", I answered, and would have escaped from the inevitable if Alexis had not been too quick for me. Adroitly barring my exit, this emigré of the 1917 Revolution who was not enthusiastic about Stalin, started a discussion.

"Russia has just denounced the Munich Agreement as a shameful surrender of Czecho-Slovakian territory by Britain and France, but Russia herself was a party to the most discreditable treaty in history. Think of Brest-Litovsk! The Bolsheviks then in March 1918, handed over to Germany 50,000,000 inhabitants of Russia. If Chamberlain has handed over Czechs to Germany, didn't Lenin and his colleagues pass on Poles, Esthonians, Letts and Lithuanians, and their own countrymen the Ukrainians, to Germany? The Bolsheviks also agreed to pay Germany £300,000,000".<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> By signing the Pact with Germany in August 1939, Russia relieved Hitler of his one war-restraining fear, that of the necessity of having to fight on two fronts. The immediate result of Russia's action was Hitler's invasion of Poland, and the sacrifice of Polish workers, including numbers of communists and of Lodz miners, to unparalleled Nazi terrorism.

I left Tania and Alexis still looking at the burst pipe and discussing the relative merits of Tolstoi and Tagore. When I visited them later, I found that characteristically the Russians had found it easier to remove the electric light bulbs in the bathroom and on the landings than to black out the windows.

I have never understood why the British people have been credited often with taking their pleasure sadly. Who but they would have turned out with merriment en masse, on the first night of the 'black-out' to look at—the dark? Who but they, with their incomparable capacity for extracting interest out of inconvenience, could on that first night, have made a picnic of the black-out? And the usual jests were not wanting. Walking along Notting Hill Gate, I heard a woman say to a man, "Makes you wonder what the Kerb Daisies'll do—flash their torches on their prey do you think?" And who as much as the British got such fun out of their barrage balloons, which made you think of flying pigs or Bottom in *A Weaver*? The chief virtue of the English is still their humour, and a people which has produced a Chaucer and a Falstaff, a people which is ever ready to laugh at itself, deserves well of others. This quality of humour, is "so common to the race that the peace of the civilised world has frequently depended upon it" as Hesketh Pearson says. And humour is a richer gift than wit, in which the English as a whole are wanting. To their virtues of which André Maurois has written in the following passage, the humour of the English might have been added: "On sea and land and in the air, England has great armaments; but the strength of her people springs equally from the kindly disciplined trusting and tenacious character moulded by a thousand years of happy fortune".

And kindly they are, as you will find if you live among the workers in London, where if you ask a woman the way, she will direct you, and when you have parted, she may turn back, overtake you, and tell you how you can save a penny by taking some other tram. Trusting indeed the plain people of England are, for they have too often trusted those who have betrayed them. And Maurois is right too in calling them tenacious, for these English who bore with heroic fortitude those hellish massacres from the air, could say with truth : " We shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air. We shall defend our Island, whatever the cost may be ; we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets." Their native stubbornness became a splendour.

The genius of the English people was well summarised by J. B. Priestley<sup>1</sup> when he wrote :. " Now it has always seemed to me that Britain, in spite of its love of tradition is the best advanced laboratory of economic and social experiment in the world. And not merely because it is a very compact and highly organised industrial community. No, the main reason is neither political nor economic but psychological. Of all peoples, American as well as European, the British seem to me to have the greatest common fund of public good will ".

It is when you have lived abroad for some time and then come back to England that you see most clearly how correct are the estimates of the English character provided by Maurois and Priestley. When I came to Plymouth again in the spring of 1940 after

<sup>1</sup> *World Review*, August, 1940.

a long time away from England, I was walking one day on the Hoe among the men who had been in battle, and the women who had borne the sorrows of war. I watched those quiet folk pass up and down the green, and as I looked at them, and at the ships lying out in the Sound, and then at the downs of Yelverton, I knew the truth of Freeman's words :—

*Whate'er was dear before is dearer now.  
There's not a bird singing upon his bough  
But sings the sweeter in our English ears : •  
There's not a nobleness of heart, hand, brain  
But shines the purer ; happiest is England now  
In those that fight, and watch with pride and tears.*

Nowhere perhaps is the true character of England revealed better than in Plymouth. And if you are a wanderer you will know that your real resting place is a port, and of all the ports of England, Plymouth is the most distinct. In its spirit it is one of the strongest citadels of the Island which is "girt about by the seas and oceans, over which the Navy reigns." So you too may come to live some time in this ancient town on the Tamar, whence sailed the buccaneers of England, Hawkins, Howard, Gilbert, and Drake (*Capten, art tha' sleeping there below?*) And you will know that the free-born spirit of English seamen lives on in the men of Plymouth today. The sailors, the men of the Arsenal, the dockyard workers and their wives who night after night snatched their sleep between guns and bombs, these were the men and women of a deathless England. And, let ye beware, any who would come up our seas to wrest from us our ancient freedom—these lads will drum you up the Channel as they drummed you long ago. They will

tell you that, when England's hour is near, the Devon men will hear from the hills of Buckland to the green on Plymouth' Hoe, the rolling of Drake's drum as they heard it long ago.

You will not find elsewhere such crowded streets so quiet as in this city on the Sound. Walk down Union Street on a Sunday evening, when the place is full of men on shore leave, and you will sense the quiet of these folk. Napoleon was struck by this same silence among British sailors, when he sailed on the *Bellerophon* to Plymouth :

"What could you not do with a 100,000 such men!" he said. "I now cease to wonder that the English were always victorious at sea. There was more noise on board the Epervier schooner which conveyed me from Isle d'Aix to Basque Roads than on board the *Bellerophon* with a crew of 600 men between Rochefort and Plymouth".<sup>1</sup> The soft air of the West Country and long life on the ocean has made the breed of these Devon sea dogs a silent one. But once set a Devon sailor yarning, and who shall give you more salt to his talk than the man who has seen the shore lights flashin' an' the night tide dashin', an' dreamin' arl the time o' Plymouth Hoe? This I know, after living in Torpoint with a family where father and four sons were sailors. Torpoint lies on the Cornish side of the Hamoaze, opposite Devonport dockyards. In 1940 few busier scenes could be found than those at Torpoint Ferry, where the boat crossed the Hamoaze to the dockyard, crowded with British, French, and Polish seamen, Czech airmen, dockyard workers,

<sup>1</sup> Alison's *History of Europe*, Vol. XIII., p. 285.

Women's Service Units, ambulance drivers, soldiers, airmen, nurses, Home Guard volunteers, firemen, every section of the population that a war calls into active service.

What did the seamen of Plymouth, broad and large, think about the war when they stood by their ships in the Sound, through the heat-hazy days in that long summer of 1940? Quite simply, these men saw it as a straight fight between democracy and despotism. It was not, as in 1914, a fight between rival imperialisms, for the British Empire by 1940 was growing into a true Commonwealth of Nations, and given time, a real Federalism would evolve, in which the crimes and blunders of the past would have no place. These sailors and dockyard workers were men who saw very clearly, in their own way, that unless such wreckers of the civilised world as Nazis and Fascists were swept from the seas, even Rousseau's dictum that all men are born free would no longer be true, for men would be born branded.

The faith of these seamen in the justice of their country's cause was the same as that of the English intellectuals, who saw that the fight was one against a life-sentence of helotism. That Nazism was the creation of an opportunist class of people who, having had very little themselves in the past, suddenly found themselves in high positions. Their time, many of the Nazis believed, would be short, so they must amass all the power and wealth they could as quickly as possible. Hitler had a lightning mind for lightning moves; the democracies wasted much time before 1939 in showing how he contradicted himself. It was absurd to expect consistency in a man whose actions were dictated only by Realpolitik. (Submission to a national psycho-analysis on the part



of the German people might have a wholesome effect, it would certainly reveal that much of modern German philosophy is morally unsound.)

Nazism, while reactionary in the sense that it is a tyranny, is also revolutionary in the sense that it is dynamic. It is indeed directed to be a complete expression of revolution, since its urge is to world domination, and at bottom this German Frankenstein is revolution without reason, conquest for conquest's sake. Through their own dynamics of revolution, Germany and Russia for a time only, approached a common front, but, representing as they did, the extremes of dialectical opposition, it was inevitable that the imperialism of Russia would clash with that of Germany; and that notwithstanding the difference between their systems, there would be ranged on the side of Russia the forces of reformatory democracy against revolutionary despotism. Inevitable too that in the case of Italy, the Roman sense of law and order could not always march with Fascism, still less with Nazism, a system fundamentally anarchic, depending as it did on dynamism for sake of dynamism.

"You bet we won't be caught playing bowls this time, if those Nazis come trying any of their games here," a young sailor said to me as we walked past Drake's green on the Hoe. "And mind you," he added, with a deeper seriousness, "we're going to make a better England when all this is over, we and the folks at home. There's a lot of things to do when this war's ended."

In these words he expresses the resolution of his race. That strong team-spirit which the 1939 war evoked between the Fighting Services and Labour, that unity of interests and purpose between the Forces and industrial workers, was shaping something new,

a way of life that Englishmen had tried to find at different stages of their long eventful history.

That sailor and his kind are kin to those landsmen of England who in earlier times had been roused to action first by their want of liberty, and later by encroachments on their liberties. That sailor and his mates and the dockyard workers of Plymouth are of a mind with their fellowcountrymen of old, the peasants who listen to that stout priest John Ball, when he bids them throw off the chains that bind them to the soil of their feudal lords. And they hearken to him after Mass, when he talks to them thus : " Ah ! ye good people, the matters goeth not well to pass in England, nor shall not do till everything be common, and that there be no villeins nor gentlemen, but that we may be all one together ". And so the word goes out from the villages to the woods where the fugitive serfs are in hiding, driven from villeins to vagabonds through the harsh penalties for non-compliance with the Statute of Labourers. Secret rhymes, intensely English, crude but telling, pass from mouth to mouth, from the peasants of Kent to the dyers of Norwich : " John Ball greeteth you all, and doth for to understand that he hath rungen your bell ". That is the sign for the Peasants' Revolt in 1381, when the brave men of Essex take up their staves and bows and cross the Thames with Jack Straw, to join the men of Kent, a hundred thousand strong on Blackheath, and march behind Wat Tyler to storm the gates of London.

" What will ye ? " asks the young boy-King, meeting them at Mile End.

" We will that you free us for ever, us and our lands ; and that we be never named nor held for serfs. " And they tell the young Richard, a man as

brave as their own leaders, that they will have no more of that Statute of Labourers which keeps their wages low and their rents high, and they will give no more unpaid services to the landowners.

Once more the men of Kent rally for their rights when in 1450, they march to Blackheath under Jack Cade, with the "Complaint of the Commons of Kent", demanding the repeal of that same Statute of Labourers, the cause of so many social ills; and this time they demand the restoration of freedom of election. Then up come the Cornishmen in 1497, because they see no reason why they should be taxed by Henry VII's ministers for payment for a war against the Scots. What has a war with Scotland got to do with them down in Cornwall? Why, asks Blacksmith Michael Joseph, should they be "grounded to powder with payments for a little stir of the Scots soon blown over?" Didn't that tax spring from that devil's device, "Morton's Fork"? So Minister Morton had better quit. Then the tillers and miners from Down-Along led by lawyer Flamark and the blacksmith, cross the Tamar, joined by the Devon men, and march through Salisbury and Winchester to Kent, that "classic soil of protests"; then on to Blackheath which is indeed black once more with rebels, fifteen thousand, this time from the West Country.

Rural England stirs again in 1547 when the Tudor sovereigns carry on that bad business of enclosing the commons, reducing so many labourers to unemployment; there are no monasteries either now to help with their charity. Well, the men of East Anglia will have none of it, so they try the landlords at the "Oak of the Reformation" for the wrongs they have done the people. Jack Kett, the tanner of

Norwich, leads the greatest movement there has ever been against the enclosure of the commons. Those lands are to be open to the people of England, so down come the fences, and down go the gates, as the peasants and yeomen swarm south to shout their wrongs in London Town, only to learn that as usual in those days, the law is on the side of the landowners.

Low wages and high bread prices, due to the Corn Laws, were the real cause of Chartism. Though it gave expression to a six-point political demand, which included universal suffrage and vote by ballot, Chartism was really a popular social movement. Roused by the fiery eloquence of Feargus O'Connor, his followers marched on Newport in 1839, and the demands of the Chartists hastened the Repeal of the Corn Laws, the first Public Health Act, and the Factory Acts. Down in Dorset, in that same vital decade of English history, six working men of Tolpuddle became martyrs for English liberty. In this little village on the Dorchester Road to Bere Regis, there stand today six cottages, given by the Trades Union Congress to the National Trust in memory of those six men who, because they had in 1834, joined a union in the hopes of getting their weekly wage raised from seven shillings to ten, had been charged with "plotting a conspiracy", and had been shipped to Australia in chains to work as galley slaves for seven years. The fate of these simple men, respected by all the local Dorset people, had roused deep resentment, and up and down England the voice of an angry people had been raised.

These protests, these uprisings had their roots in the very earth of England. That sailor on the Hoe struck back to those roots when he said "We're going to make a better England." And when he said that Nazism should gain no inch of English soil, he was

saying what Anatole France had said, more than a quarter of a century earlier: "For neither France and her allies nor the world at large will gain anything by a peace that would leave still in existence that chronic cause of war we name German militarism. No, in very truth, humanity would gain nothing and it would lose security, liberty, and even hope." An Irish writer, Terence MacSwiney, conveys, in more general terms, the same idea in his *Principles of Freedom*, when he says:

"The end of general peace is to give all nations freedom in essentials, to realise the deeper purpose, possibilities, fulness, and beauty of life; it is not to have a peace at any price, peace with a certain surrender, the nearest peace that is akin to slavery."

Yes, Nazism, breed and seed of it must go before man could live with the dignity of his natural rights, and after that the English people would set to right so many things at home. They have always been credited, and correctly, with a genius for compromise, but a time would come when the people of England would, for a spell, no longer compromise. But whatever pattern they would give to their civilisation of the future, it would never be one that rigidly conformed to an idea, a theory. The Puritan Revolution in England failed because the English people are never doctrinaires. "The fundamental difference between British statesmanship and that of all the other nations of Europe is this, that the English take things as they find them and do their best to get them going, with a minimum of friction, while the others start with an idea and try to force things to fit in". Cohen-Portheim has made this statement with considerable perspicacity. "Continental nations" he goes

on to say, "regard England as perfidious because she knows nothing of traditional friendship or enmities, and allies herself to-day with France against Germany, tomorrow with Germany against France. . . . But that only means that she definitely does not allow herself to be deflected from her straight course by any principles. Her system is No Principles."

I have said that in Plymouth you will sense the spirit of England. When you have stayed there, go to Torquay, and you will find another facet of that strange shape, the English mould. Compare the two towns yourself, and you will know what I mean. You may not of course be able to do any thinking at all in that place of brilliant sunshine, for with its hothouse climate you could undergo an operation without anæsthetics in Torquay. There is one thing you will never miss there, and that is, sleep. Beyond the town is Babbacombe Bay, bright and beautiful when I saw it, a wide space of shining blue. It seemed to stand for all the things men wanted, freedom, peace, beauty, clear vision, full, flowing life. It was difficult to realise just then that we had none of these things. But man will never cease to strive for them. Those men and women on that Torpoint Ferry boat at Plymouth stood for something finer even than that loveliness of Babbacombe Bay. For each one of them was saying, in his and her own way :

*I will not cease from mental fight  
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand  
Till we have built Jerusalem  
In England's green and pleasant land.*

I walked along the soggy soil of the coast of Red Devon as far as Langstone Point. Green downs, red cliffs, blue sea, and then when night fell, those Spanish

stars of Devon. On the cliffs were cairns of stone, which from a distance made the ground like a place of ancient battle. But they were new defence works, and seeing them, I said, "as long as there are men left to do these things, there will always be an England."

### POSTSCRIPT.

THE kind of England there will be, depends on the post-war temper of the English people themselves. If, war-weary, they relapse into the supine mood of the pre-war period, and neglect the watch upon their shores over which they kept such bold guard in war-time, if, cloudy-minded, or wishfully-thinking again, the British people after a victory, give up to international control any part of their Fleet, their chief arm of defence, then indeed they may not prove so fortunate a third time. For a third war there would certainly be, if British sea-power declined below the strength necessary to keep any predatory Power from aggression.

Failing universal total disarmament, international control of naval armaments is certainly an end to be desired, but the fulfilment of this aim in the present state of the world, could only spell fresh disaster. Within the last quarter of a century there have been two of the greatest wars in history, and for her disarmament undertakings after 1920 Britain is paying after 1940 in terms of Armageddon. But already the architects of Utopias are designing plans for the extension of sea-power to nations young in sea-sense, at the expense of England, the country which has now proved herself fit to rule the waves in the interests of general

civilisation. The League of Nations, which was the most advanced co-operative effort in the history of mankind, embraced many of the ideas of the post-1941 planners. Yet Thuggery and other manifestations of Aggression are more widespread now than ever before, and certain peoples have reverted to a lupine type of society. Scientific discoveries have placed within the reach of unscrupulous people the means of destroying multitudes; the fate of an unprepared nation may be annihilation. If anyone reads into this paragraph anything jingoistic, he is mistaken. I write as a radical, a realist, and as one who believes that the days of sovereign States as we know them now, are numbered, and I write also as one who has the traditional Irish love of freedom. It is just because of this outlook that I agree with those who regard the maritime supremacy of Britain as an essential condition for international security.

The English people by their balanced courage in the face of disasters, by their daring at Dunkirk, by their unnamed seamen on unnamed trawlers, sweepers, drifters, on everything that sails from a coaler to a cruiser, have proved themselves worthy to keep open the seas that ships may pass upon their lawful occasions, and to intercept those which go on unlawful ones. Indeed, one might even suggest that the only desirable dictatorship would be one of British Blue-jackets. The British Commonwealth of Nations must co-operate with the most civilised countries in maintaining the freedom of the seas, upon which the survival of civilisation depends. To ensure this, Britain must make herself so strong that no one will dare to attack her. The assumption of international goodwill is illusory, and for a long time to come any scheme based on such is doomed to failure.



In many quarters these views will not be popular ; indeed they will be very unpopular ones, when the time comes for a "Peace" settlement. But let us remember that there is as much danger in peace as in war making, and that the first often occasions the second. Many who hold these views do so as converts ; many (including the writer of this book), have been compelled by the logic of events to see their own former pacifist position as one incompatible with the maintenance of civilisation. Any peace, to be durable, must be a just one. But the arbiters of justice must be very Wise Men. Those who decide our destinies must be men with intimate experience of foreign affairs : no democracy should entrust its vital interests to those who have neither expert knowledge nor the ability to use that of others.

While we must remember that numbers of Germans have heroically opposed Nazism, and have suffered for their courage, we must also remember that, whether it be a Frederick the Great, Bismarck, Von Clausewitz, Kaiser Wilhelm II, or an Adolf Hitler, such men with their doctrines of blood and iron, with their worship of war, have commanded the admiration and the service of millions of Germans. Many influential Englishmen have written that German aggression and race-persecution are due to the existence of Prussia. But it was in the famous *bier-halle* of Munich, capital of Bavaria, that the doctrines of Nazocracy were first propounded ; and after the alleged murder of vom Rath in Paris by the young Polish Jew, Munich was the scene of some of the most ferocious of the anti-Semitic activities. The Bavarian city of Nuremberg, with its 'kolossal' Nazi rallies, was second to no town in the Reich for its displays of enthusiasm for Hitler, who himself is of the Ost-Reich. Before the

war of 1914, Germany had the largest number of communists and of social democrats in any country in Europe, yet in 1940, the German people showed no general reaction against Hitler's invasion of neutral States, nor against the Nazi rule of terror in Western Poland. Those people who maintain that Versailles made Hitlerism inevitable, might recall too, that on the eve of the 1914 war Germany, so far from being a 'have-not' Power, was a first-class one, with a navy superior in strength to her Fleet in 1939; she had colonies, an extensive trade with Russia and the East, and she had the finest army in the world. And, just because of these plus quantities, she embarked on the war of 1914. The dilemma therefore is a grave one for those who would oppose the Pan-Germanism which has wrought such evil to modern civilisation, which has forced the most advanced nations to adopt a policy of retrogression. For the necessary maintenance of powerful punitive forces is a serious reflection on human progress. But without such forces the British Commonwealth of Nations and all freedom-loving peoples can never, from now on, hope to survive as anything but slave-States.

In this year of 1941, the British people are stretching back into their history, recalling their traditions, remembering themselves as a maritime people, and enshrined for ever in their race-story is the epic of Dunkirk when a motley of mariners left the English beaches to bring its Army home. Not only the British people but the Irish too, must maintain a strong maritime defence after this war. It is more necessary indeed for Eire to develop her Maritime Inscription Service which she started in 1940, than it even is for her to extend her efficient Local Security Force. And this call should go out from Donegal to Dunquin.

On this policy, the two islands could find common agreement, and even the basis for that closer co-operation so earnestly desired by the majority of the people of Britain and Ireland, and so necessary now for the security of both countries. The Irish may remember with pride their own sea-faring traditions from the days of Brendan the Navigator, their mercantile renown when Waterford was "the Port of the Sun". And the English may remember the wise words of that unknown Elizabethan who, in warning of the coming of the Armada, counselled his countrymen, "Keep then the sea, for it is the wall of England". Both the Island Races may also take as a common watchword, "The price of liberty is eternal vigilance".

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